

WITCHCRAFT, SOCIAL CONTROL AND PRIMORDIAL ADJUDICATION IN AFRICAN SOCIETIES

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ABSTRACT

Many African nations are developing and undeveloped young politically, economically, socially independent and having their judicial adjudication just evolving while many African societies are still pre-literate. The Justice system in many of these societies are old, moribund, with traditional norms still being held unto especially social institutions of social control and adjudication. The Justice and social control system of these African societies are mysterious, esoteric and exist in closed scheme tied up in traditional beliefs. Ethnographic exploration of African societies carried out in stratified random selection revealed strong relationship between adjudication of cases and social control and these are tied up in the belief system. Witchcraft, sorcery entrenched in these societies translate into social relationships. Behaviours, interactions, case adjudication and arbitration are still determined by traditional norms stagnating development in African societies despite modern global trends. It is therefore imperative on societies in Africa to align with the world at large and key in to the global Justice system.

KEYWORDS: Social-control, African societies, Witchcraft, Norms, Adjudication

Introduction

Different scholarships and intellectual disciplines have made efforts to explain the phenomenon of witchcraft in the universe, and through generations, mankind's attempts to put into order the mysteries of the universe and the complexities of human behaviour have resulted into several strategies. Among Africans, the quest for social order and thus social control is inclusive and holistic. Efforts on social order and control as embedded in African philosophy and science, define the universe in a larger context, grounding people's sense of reality, identity and their code of behaviour in a grand scheme; visible and invisible, spiritual and material realities confronting man. Western science explains cosmology by countless molecules but African science explains it by countless spirits, and pantheons. To control human behaviour; the spiritual recourse is rife in many African societies as life to Africans is a continuum of the spiritual, and the natural not given to separatism; one influencing the other and the spiritual in which witchcraft situates, have influence on human behaviour therefore, manipulation in the spirit realm is a craft in the intention of moral guard of the social environment from yore in many African societies.

In African societies and in general, witchcraft has always been perceived with fear and trepidation. Mere mention of witches inspires chill and dread. Witchcraft is associated with the esoteric yet it is besides us in Africa, it is forlorn, yet nigh, a mystery which Africans live with. In traditional African belief, man is a tripartite being; he is a spirit, possessing a soul and living inside the body. This epitomizes the concept of witchcraft acting on people's souls while outside the bodies. Witches are human beings with spiritual and supernatural powers to manipulate the lives of their fellow humans in the spirit realm that would manifest in the physical. Bascom (1969) posits witches are humans, they are mostly old women who have small birds or cats as animal familiars into which their souls can enter to go out at night and give a person a disease or suck his blood while sleeping.

Anthropologists have devoted special attention to the field of social organization for nearly a century and have made more striking scientific progress here than in any other branch

of their subject. As a consequence, they have developed a somewhat complex technical vocabulary which it is necessary to employ in any discussion of society. The concepts employed though seldom difficult to grasp, are not always familiar to the general reader, and the terms are not always fully standardized. The African continent, with approximately 240 million inhabitants, ranks third in global population, behind Eurasia and North America and appreciably ahead of South America, but it has more distinct peoples and cultures than any other continent. Africa is home to about 3000 ethnic groupings inhabiting diverse societies but there are more similarities in values, norms and culture than there are differences that can make the region, being described as African societies not too wide off the mark; society being a structured human grouping with similar social institutions, traditions, values, norms and core territory. However, in any society, there could be no coherent social life unless the social relationships which bind people together were at least to some degree orderly, institutionalized and predictable.

To maintain an orderly system of social relations people, have to be subjected to some degree of compulsion, they cannot, all the time, do exactly as they like for often self-interest may incite behaviours that are incompatible with the common good, societal norms or rules. And so it is that in societies some rules and norms may be trespassed. Thus, some kinds of constraints on people's behaviour are acknowledged and on the whole adhered to. These rules and the means by which they are enforced differ greatly from society to society. But always, they more or less effectively secure some degree of social order.

However, witchcraft is conceptually different from magic and sorcery, the difference is not in the physical beings of the practitioners but in the practices. Sorcerers use magical items of physical objects accompanied by incantations or spells to injure or harm people; they are consulted to assist in effecting consequences on other fellows in the society. Though their work is often defined in the negative but magic can be offensive as well as protective. It can be used to harm, injure and can also heal. Magic conjures and also uses physical objects such as plant and animal extracts including that of human and often accompanied by incantations

or spells. Magic is the acting out of a situation, the expression of a desire in symbolic form. Magic is imbued with physicality to induce spiritual causality. While witches have no palpable apparatus of their craft and their activities are spiritual. Witches are not consulted to harm though the biblical witch of Endor was consulted by Saul the king of Israel but witches in African societies is a secret cult, discussed in awe and fear seldom approached or consulted physically.

Witchcraft has been in the world from time immemorial and generally perceived in the negative. The Christian Bible has it in the book of Exodus 22:18 that sorcery and anything allied should not be permitted to exist. Deuteronomy has it that sorcery, necromancy, omen interpretation are abominations. The Book of Revelation says sorcerers shall burn in hell fire. The Book of the 2nd Kings, chapter twenty-one, verse six condemned king Ahab for dealing with wizards. The Book of Acts of the Apostles, chapter nineteen, verse eighteen denounced magic and wizardry. The book of Leviticus, chapter twenty, verse six warns against interacting with mediums and wizards. Though witchcraft is shrouded in secrecy and mystery, its fear is strongly felt among African societies making people to obey the norms and values for fear of incurring the wrath of witches and thus bewitched. Also, the stigma of being tagged a witch in cases of deviant behaviour curtails people's anti-social behaviour since a wicked, surly, melancholic, unsociable member of society is often tagged a witch. The bottom line is that witches are human beings with supernatural powers to harm or protect.

Deviance occurs when a person's or group's attachment to social bonds is weakened. According to this view, people care about what others think of them and conform to social expectations because of their attachments to others and what others expect of them. Socialization is important in producing conformity to social rules, and it is when this conformity is broken that deviance occurs. This theory focuses on how deviants are either attached, or not, to common value systems and what situations break people's commitment to these values. Most people probably feel some impulse towards deviant behaviour at some time, but their attachment to social norms prevents them from being deviant. Social control

implies the social intercourse is regulated in accordance with established and recognized standards. It is comprehensive, omnipotent and effective to stimulate order, discipline and mutuality; discouraging, and if need be, punish the deviant. Generally speaking, social control is the control of the society over individuals in order to maintain the organization and order in the society. This control is necessary in order to have desired behaviour from individuals and enable individuals to develop social qualities in tandem with the societal expectations and norms.

Society in order to exist and progress has to exercise a certain control over its members since any marked deviation from the established ways is considered a threat to its welfare. Social control is the term anthropologists and sociologists apply to those mechanisms by which any society maintains a normative social system. It refers to all the ways and means by which society enforces conformity to its norms.

Activities of witches: Parrinder (1962) asserts there is no cult of witchcraft, while Jegede (2010) affirms cultism in witchcraft and even referred to grove of banana plants, under pawpaw trees, river banks as meeting spot of witches. Other scholars referred to their meeting places as tree tops in market square, three road-path intersections but the general belief is that witches have meeting spots that are physical which are referred to as covens.

Witchcraft is to be understood within the social setting of African societies. To Parrinder (1962), witchcraft is a social activity like Sabbath. But the conceptual belief in witchcraft is exclusive of religious leanings or convictions. Regardless of religious affiliation, witchcraft situates in the worldview which is the innate cognitive perception of the world in which one lives, the interpretive comprehension of the universe while religion is the worship of the supreme deity and the acceptance of an unquestionable truth in the lordship of a deity. Thus seen, worldview is extraneous of religious leaning but the comprehension of the universe one lives in and the energies there-in.

Prince (1961) cited in Williams (1956) stated, there is certainly a real witch cult comprising many elderly women with male leaders. It is very widespread, highly secret and

much feared by the people. Witches are believed to have power to see the human intestines, liver and other internal organs as well as foetus in the uterus of their mothers. Witches according to Simpson (1980) cannot be recognized physically or by any overt behaviour. But a good observer can recognize a witch through her behaviour as example; a young woman who defies her elders or a woman who keeps losing her children is suspected of contributing her own children to feasts where the witches jointly eat one another's children. It is believed, according to Simpson, witches are not friends or members of a cult in everyday life. It is only when they change into non-human forms that they are members of a society. The spirits (birds-souls of witches), fly to meetings at midnight and upon arrival, they become human beings again. At the meetings, the witches sit according to rank attending to cases brought to them as litigations or pleas. Decisions are taken which include how and when to kill those whom they have agreed to kill, inflict those marked for affliction and who will do the killing. Pleas are also taken to assuage a victim's plight or pronounce the demands requested from a victim.

Witchcraft Acquisition: Areas of witchcraft prominence such as among the Azande, Ibiobios, Nupe/Tapa, Yoruba, Calabar, Fulani, Kanuri, Edo, Ashante, Kpelle, Igala, Ebira, Zulu, Berbers, Luo, Khoi, Luwendu, Ga, Lugbara, Buganda, Nuer to mention but a few, all spread across the African continent have witchcraft established through supernatural means. Among the Ibiobio for instance, according to Haviland (2008), witchcraft is in form of red, white and black threads in needles and other ingredients that are swallowed by the recruits which transmits into them the witchcraft spirit. Haviland (2008) opined, they are capable of harming people and thus unacceptable. This view is not valid outside Ibiobio land which Haviland studied and the view cannot be generalized.

Among the Yoruba, witchcraft is seen as socially acceptable to some extent, and acquisition is through meals; recruits are given meals to partake where-in the spirit has been transferred and then swallowed by the initiate and this has been reported among school children in Yoruba land transferring witchcraft spirit to fellow pupils. Also, in some parts of Yoruba land, witchcraft is acquired by partaking in kola-nuts given by a member to an initiate.

Another form of recruitment and initiation is when a neophyte finds herself in the dream familiarizing with strange women at a meeting spot. Simpson (1980) stated that formerly only old women were witches but nowadays, witches include younger as well as older persons.

Witchcraft is widely believed to be hereditary and passed from mothers, aunties, grandmothers to females within the family but not to males, but in few cases, it can be solicited in membership. It is believed witches do not receive training or serve apprenticeship; witchcraft may be inherited but not through biological inheritance. The power may pass as stated earlier from mother to daughter through various media and it is not uncommon for a old witch shortly before her death, to transfer her 'bird' to someone, often a daughter. The witches may decide to bring a woman into their association in the spirit realm and give her something to eat which will make her a witch either voluntarily or non-voluntarily. If non-voluntarily, the woman becomes a witch without realizing it until much later. In some other instances, one who wishes to become a witch in order to avenge a wrong or for other reasons may indicate her interest and eventually meet a witch to give her the desired power at a price. Views, according to Simpson (1980) differs concerning where a witch keeps her power. Usually, it is said she keeps it in her stomach, or use the eyeballs as repository. At times, she may keep her power outside her own body- in an anthill, in a calabash, inside a tree or an animal.

Esoteric transcendentalism in witchcraft: The belief in many quarters in African societies is that the spirits of witches are able to leave their body to attend meetings in their chosen covens. Some believe they transform into birds and fly to their meeting places, some believe they go in animal forms like sheep often seen congregating on the street. The general belief is that witches place their legs transfixed on the walls of their rooms, to transcend to meeting spot and if anyone finds her in that position and remove the leg, the spirit would immediately come back to the body.

Colour Symbolism in witchcraft

The Yoruba according to Jegede (2010) has three categories of witchcraft: the black, the red and the white. The categories inform their attitudes and activities in their covens. The covens

or meeting spots are allied to the courts where cases are brought and judged. The black witches that profess black witchcraft are believed to be extremely wicked and non-tolerant. They are the most dreaded among the categories since cases brought to them are hardly investigated and they even go out of their way to inflict hardship on their fellow humans on flimsy excuses regardless of their relationship with their victim.

The red category of witches is believed to be harmful only to those that offend them or pronounced guilty of offence against the society or their fellows. It is assumed the red witches do not harm or punish indiscriminately and their accused are innocent until proven guilty. Cases brought to them in the spirit realm are investigated and if found guilty the accused is then punished. The punishment ranges from bareness, to illnesses that are often intractable and may not be diagnosed by any medical practitioner. The punishment goes to include, motor-vehicle accident, blindness, limb-crippling and death. Even the seemingly common illnesses such as headache, stomach disorder may lead to death. The punishment also includes ill-luck and lack of success in endeavours, even to lack of suitors, failure in academics and bankruptcy in business.

The white categories are believed to be caring, benevolent and are often regarded as fortunate to have as mothers, or wives because they look after the interest of their own. They are believed to be protective of their children and husbands hence the success of their beneficiaries in endeavours is guaranteed. In Yoruba parlance, they are referred to as *aje olomo* meaning witches that protect their children. The white witches' category believed to exist purposely for caring are responsible for all the good things that happen in the world. They manipulate the positive force of life as life is believed to have both positive and negative forces. Positive forces in the universe bring peace, prosperity, longevity and good health and the negative force ushers otherwise. A new dimension is added to this belief by Jegede (2010). In Jegede's view the white category is believed to be persons or behind persons of extraordinary gifts who use their gifts for development in areas such as sciences, technology and medicine. According to Jegede (2010) all inventions that have impacted the world

positively have the inputs of white witches. Inventions of electricity, electronics including the computer, and expertise in science is not possible without input of witchcraft.

Ogunde, a prominent Yoruba folklorist and artiste succinctly portrayed witches as the owners, custodians or guardian of the universe and are referred to as '*aiye*' literarily meaning the world. He also categorized witches into black, red and white. The black forms are evil, the red is wicked and the white are benevolent. This is in consonance with Ngubane (1977), explanation of Zulu medicine. Medicine burnt into black powder is used in treatment of infirmities, and when the patient is getting better, red medicine is introduced which symbolizes twilight; the midway between darkness and light and when the patient is getting healed, white medicine in form of infusion is introduced. Witchcraft, illness and medication are thus conceptualized in colour symbolism. The black is bad, the red though not so good, is in between black and white, while the white is conceptualized as good.

Beattie (1968) took his readers to a test of conscience. He says many people in the Western world think the word; *logos*, has its own special power. To say or even think something solemnly and emphatically enough is somehow to make it more likely to happen. He says further, members of modern societies may be frightened and ashamed when they become conscious of hidden wishes for the death or injury of someone they dislike, and may feel guilt when the object of their antipathy is run over by a bus. To Beattie (1968), the belief in power of words, thoughts and symbols is by no means monopoly of simpler societies. He affirms, most members of advanced societies have at least some non-scientific, non-empirical beliefs and practices which are sometimes embedded in formal religious rituals that may not be put to any kind of tests which might disprove them.

Gendered form of Witches

The belief is that witches are mostly old women while their male counterparts are wizards. Elders, especially old people within the community are treated with respect and must not be offended or incur their wrath lest the person risks bewitchment. Any encounter with an elderly especially a female as mentioned earlier, is with caution.

Falola (2016) citing Washington (2000) state, belief in witches and bewitchment among the Yoruba has survived for centuries and continues to be very significant to this day. Fear of witches looms large in Yoruba consciousness and practice. Whenever references are made to witches or to their names ‘*aiye* or *iya*’ it is prudent to touch the ground with one’s finger tips. According to Falola (2016) the Yoruba associate witchcraft with women and wizardry with men. Witches possess considerable superhuman mystical powers and can perform wonder. They can hurt their victims, kill an enemy, block the fortunes of others and cause a business failure for a neighbour. They are capable of doing anything evil with impunity. To Falola, Yoruba believe witches turn into birds, cats, sheep or goats, and congregate in the forest at night under giant trees, where they feast on the flesh and blood of their victims. The general belief is that witches are women cult and their male counterparts are wizards.

Totem in Witchcraft: Totemism is a mystical relationship between an individual or group and an object presumably a living thing such as birds, animals and plants. Totemic objects are adopted by individuals or groups serving as familiar spirits and things that are identified with. Totemic objects are transferable from man to other living things. Bascom (1969) stated witches have small birds or cats as familiars into which their souls can enter. Among the Yoruba as example; the antelope is regarded as a totem of witches probably because the skin of the animal has the *Ifa* oracle corpus signs as marks on the skin.

Witchcraft Taboo: It is believed witches avoid contact with *Obo* (*Ficus platyphylla*) tree and the bark of the tree. Tasting the bark of the tree is an abomination to witches and can spell doom for them. The belief is that any totemic bird of a witch that happens to fly directly on top or perch on the tree may likely lose its gravity and fall. It is also believed that witches do not confess in the open. The point of confession marks their exit from the cult.

Witchcraft and control within social setting

Most misfortunes are attributed to witchcraft and are directed at someone acquainted with the witch thus, Evans Pritchard (1937) ascribed witchcraft among the Azande in East Africa to the social setting stating that witchcraft is only effective and recognized within a closed

system. It is therefore a social phenomenon as well as spiritual since it does not only provide an acceptable way of thinking about socially disruptive experiences of illness and death, it also prescribes a socially approved way of solving issues. This is done by canalizing and giving institutionalized recognition to the hostile emotions that are inevitable in a small community. The emotions are poured out on a phenomenon recognized by the whole society. Not only that, among the Azande, witchcraft is a social sanitation against anti-social behaviours for a man that is surly and unfriendly within the neighbourhood stands the risk of been bewitched or he is regarded as a witch by his or her neighbours.

The political system lends credence to the social setting within Azande society as witchcraft, forms a coherent system on the level of thought and action with important implication for the community life. The Azande witchcraft may be employed against bad people such as anonymous murderers within the community. This is corroborated by Malinowski (1922) observation among the Triobrand Island community in the Pacific; that the village heads use witchcraft to beat into line deviant members to conform to social norms. The Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria belief in witchcraft is strongly felt and dreaded. A stingy individual stands the risk of being bewitched. In a festival or personal ceremonial feast, a perceived miserable meal served to a guest or served round the community may draw the wrath of witches. Care is always taken to treat people equally when providing feast meal especially to the poor otherwise it attracts anger that may result into being bewitched by the aggrieved. Of note is reverence given to age among Africans, it is generally believed though there are now exceptions that witches are mostly old women, it is thus imperative to respect the old that are more in the position of bewitching people. Failure to assist an old person especially a woman is an invitation to bewitchment. Rudeness can also invite bewitchment.

Young wives are required to be respectful and treat the mother-in-law with honour and respect otherwise they stand the risk of bewitchment. Most women inability to conceive is alluded to witchcraft and this often stems from disaffections between wives and women of the family compound.

Belief in witchcraft persists in Yoruba land despite modernization although the fear may likely be decreasing of natural events or infirmities that were beyond ordinary daily experience explained off by the mysterious circumstances of witchcraft. Falola (2016) explained the ontology of witchcraft as an esoteric science that belongs to the generation of beings in the cosmos of human created by the supreme deity.

Belief in witches reminds people of their religious devotion to the deity and explains good and evil in moral theology. As examples, if a child has malaria and is not responding to treatment, the parents and relatives will look inwards to find out why the illness is intractable. If a witch cries in the night (usually in form of bird sound) and a child dies the following morning, there is no hesitation in ascribing the death of the ill-child to the cries of the witch in form of bird sound. A witch is therefore someone with mysterious powers to do good and evil. It is believed, a good witch uses his or her witchcraft to protect the children, while the evil witch, has diabolical spirit to punish members within the family.

Beattie (1968) posits, there could be no coherent social life unless the social relationships that bind people together are to some extent orderly to which the alternative is chaos. Some degree of compulsion is therefore necessary to maintain an orderly system of social relations, thus, some kind of constraints on peoples' behaviour are needed. To understand how community social order works, one has to understand how it is enforced. Many societies in Africa lack the Western pattern of social control but some sort of social stability is achieved, without resort to the familiar Western machinery of police, courts and judges. With categories of people, there are ordered maintenance of relations, physically unseen but felt within the social aggregate.

Social order, maintained through witchcraft is thus different from what Weber (1947) propounded as legitimized or authorized social power which is the right vested in some categories of persons. Malinowski (1948) opines that social order is not maintained only by repressive force of an embryonic criminal law, to which Radcliffe Brown (1952) points out

that categories of Western jurisprudence are inapplicable to the institution of simpler societies, that have social control embedded in their belief system.

Findings and Discussion

It is revealed, most African societies are experiencing cultural lag as theorized by William Ogburn explaining that there is difference between material culture and non-material culture. Culture and belief system take time to catch up with technological innovations. The change in mindset, mentifacts and belief is slower than the change in technology. In many African societies, technological advances occur faster than changes in rules and norms. This however may affect the interactions and relationships of many African societies and a continent as a whole within the comity of nations within the United Nations, International court of arbitration as primordial adjudication evidenced in the traditional forms of social control runs contrary to modern global judicial practices. Moribund and archaic norms and belief system that need to be jettisoned are still being held onto in many African societies and this may affect developments within African continent as evidenced in case studies revealed.

Case Studies of Witchcraft and Moral Values

Various cases attributed to witchcraft in African societies are alluded to breach of norms on; generosity, respect, social justice, humility and modesty. A young lady in Ibadan, Nigeria aged twenty-seven having being married for four years without a child claimed the source of her inability to have a child is her mother-in law's witchcraft. This was ascribed to the lady's rude attitude in the husband's family. An occultist was consulted who took her to a woman presumed to have higher spiritual power to appeal to the alleged witch to either release her from spiritual captivity or use a higher power to deliver the lady. This led to the lady having some nails sucked out of her navel, being the offensive object preventing her pregnancy.

A reported case of a young man who murdered her own mother was featured in the dailies. The offence of the victim was alleged spiritual affliction of failure in life endeavours by the victim on the assailant.

A notable aged artiste who often played the role of witches in Yoruba Nollywood films was strangled by her grandson on the allegation of the cause of his serial failure in life. The case resulted into police arrest and investigation.

A daily newspaper carried a picture of an old woman who allegedly fell down while spread-eagled across the sky, making a headline of the newspaper.

It is believed that people who have witchcraft; usually headmen of communities among the Nuer, can cause a person whose behaviour is generally disapproved, to become ill. Akeem Tijani a spiritualist disclosed witches love givers who give out of their little means and not a big spender who flaunts wealth from abundance and as a matter-of-fact witches hate pride and flaunting wealth by individuals and those who do such stand the risk of bewitchment.

Interpretation of Witchcraft

It may be more appropriate to regard witchcraft in African societies as interplay of psychological, sociological, cultural and economic variables. Williams (1956) in his sociological hypothesis states, “witchcraft stems from the strains inherent in the kinship system; of anxiety and guilt in the women; and ambivalent sentiments in men- affection and respect for the mothers of their children, but fear of the inadequacy of maternal care, and fear that the jealousy of women in a polygamous household within a compound group giving the corporate members in a continuing agnatic lineage to their children but denying it to themselves, may be vented as spite against their husbands.” Prince (1961) in his own psychological hypothesis holds that Yoruba witch:

represents the collective image of the bad mother in a people who have not yet attained the depressive position in their emotional development, it would not be distorting the Yoruba concept too much to think of witchcraft as representing all the bad aspects of the mother or the female.

Witchcraft may thus be a reaction of women to patriarchal dominance in African societies. Witchcraft is an extension of women protest and inter-gender conflict between women and men’s power. It is symptomatic of reactionary resistance to male dominance in Africa.

In a social setting of polygyny where co-wives live in the same homestead of a man; rivalries and animosities are engendered and such marital setting requires fortification and protection of both the mother and their children in a volatile and highly hostile social environment common among co-wives; seeking spiritual power through witchcraft seems the plausible solution.

Witchcraft can also be gleaned through the understanding of avenging wrongs done to a seemingly powerless wife in an environment different from her family of birth; she is seen as a ‘stranger’ and treated as such until through alliances and counter-alliances she becomes familiar with the terrain. It is therefore not uncommon for a mother to transfer witchcraft to a daughter at the point of entering into marriage to protect her in her new abode and for favor in an expected hostile environment.

Witch-doctors and Witches Nemesis

A wave of witch-hunting referred to as the ‘*Atinga*’ cult emerged in the 1950s that emanated from the West African country of Republic of Benin and spread into Nigerian cities and villages. Groups of men beating drums enter into compounds especially with the invitation of the chiefs with the aim of the drum beats alluring witches into the open for confessions of their atrocities. A lot of women were thus pointed out and made to confess. This led to many houses of supposed witches been burnt and razed down, local deities’ shrines pulled down. The action was banned and the cult proscribed by the colonial government as it was discovered the Atinga cult was sponsored by the chiefs whose offices had been made secular under the Protectorate. Witch-doctors hold ambivalent position in dealing with witches. They act as intermediaries between victims and the witches and they also confront recalcitrant witches. In that wise, they may consult traditional religion priests in the confrontation to release victims from the hands of the witches.

Witchcraft and modernity

The witchcraft complex is not a part of religion but it is related to the religious realm. Although belief in the power of local deities and ancestors has decreased sharply, belief in the witches

is still widespread. Witches provide a convenient explanation of one's troubles or the troubles of a traditional doctor's client and serve as a possible means of striking back at enemies. Through witchcraft confidence may be obtained to cope with life's situations. According to Simpson (1980), schooling does not necessarily obliterate fantasies about witches since, in a period when many people hesitate to be seen participating in a traditional religious ceremony, witchcraft has the advantage of being carried on secretly.

Simpson (1980) citing Morton-Williams (1956) posited that the latter's comment on Yoruba methods of dealing with witchcraft in the past is interesting. It seems to have been rare in the past because nowadays, accusation of witchcraft is forbidden in the criminal code of Nigeria. Authorities have no legal ground to take actions on witches. Dealing with witches now lies with masquerade *egungun*, bull-roarer *oro* cults and the ancestors *ara-ile*. For the ancestors *ara-ile*; are evidences of immortality, no less than because they symbolize the desired triumph of male vigour over female.

Conclusion

Witchcraft in African societies has ironically stood its stand against tides of social change in African societies and African groups rely on the existence of exoteric and extra-mundane system of adjudication to beat into line erring members of the society, informally controlling behaviours and enforcing conformity to societal norms without recourse to the physical enforcement of rules and laws. Iconoclasm within the realm of religion and many other aspects of culture has not affected the belief in witchcraft the negative perception in different quarters within the public space notwithstanding because; witchcraft situates in the worldview of African peoples. The fear for the cult has a stabilizing factor in moral and social control within African communities where members understand the reality of their cosmos and adjust behaviour in line with the norms of the society whose jurisprudence transcends the visible courts. However, this belief system is not in line with the global practice and runs contrary to modern Justice System. The world is turning into a global village with the innovations in internet technology, international business transactions connecting diverse cultures and, to be

able to compete and connect with the world, societies in Africa need to adjust to the modern form of social control practices and adjudication.

Recommendations

In spite of the fact that this unique system of informal adjudication has been in place from time immemorial in African societies, efforts should be made by the over 3000 societies in Africa located within the 54 nations on the African continent to adjust to the modern system of adjudication that are visible, transparent, recordable rather than the closed system that is not comprehensive nor understood by non-initiates. Judiciary should transcend the local enclave of African societies to extend into other parts of the world since the world is now a global village where transactions are daily incorporating nations economically, politically, socially and in other aspects of life in international forum. Human activities are no longer restricted to the corners of pre-literate societies where primordial opinions and systems held sway and as such, social control and conforming to global practices in adjudication of cases enforcing conformity to humanity should be embraced by African societies.

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