INTERROGATING THE INVOLVEMENT OF NATIVE GODS IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Alao, David Oladimeji PhD.,

Dept. of Political Science, Babcock Business School, Ilishan,   Ogun State, Nigeria.
P.M.B 21244 Ikeja- Lagos, Nigeria

ABSTRACT: *Africa is witnessing increasing incidences of direct violence and demonstrated inability of governments to restore enduring peace largely through Western models of conflict resolution that necessitated the interrogation of traditional models with emphasis on the involvement of native gods. The study was descriptive and qualitative that relied on secondary data sources. It found that the Traditional models provided for a Win-Win arrangement relied on collective wisdom of the society while the involvement of native gods compelled compliance with resolution terms for fear of non-compliance. It found that governments largely failed to remain neutral in managing conflicts. Specific cases of successful interventions of native god were the final resolution of Aguleri-Umuleri, Umunebo- Umuokuzu and Okrika conflicts in Nigeria. The study concluded that the relevance of native gods is largely limited to intra-ethnic conflicts while it has been perverted by political elites. The study recommended that governments must pay attention to early warning signal to minimize direct violence and develop strong political will to confront the issues of conflict. Finally, the traditional models concerning the intervention of native gods could be combined with Western models where practicable as it cannot stand alone.*

KEYWORDS: Conflict, Traditional models, Western models, Conflict resolution, Political will.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing incidences of conflicts degenerating to direct violence are sources of concern for governments in Africa and international community. Sen (2009) observes that after the year 1945, there have been more conflicts and wars within states than between states, and the effects have become pronounced since 1980s particularly in Africa. The countries in Africa such as Somalia, Sierra Leone, Cote D'Ivore, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as well as Nigeria, Mali, Algeria, Egypt, Chad, Sudan, Central African Republic and Niger, to mention but few have experienced outright civil war or varying degree of political instability, insecurity and also victims of continuous direct violence.

Osaghae in Albert (2005) recorded that forty seven out of the fifty three African nations then were involved in conflicts or wars. South Sudan that emerged as the 54th independent nation in Africa within the last few years is currently taking its own doze of internal violence. The Conflict related Map (2008) shows that 88 per cent of the death related conflicts worldwide from 1990 to 2007 were located in Africa. Daley (2006) observes that within the Great Lakes region alone comprising of DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda, all have engaged in one form of conflict or the other. Eleven outright wars in were recorded in DRC, five in Burundi and two in Rwanda that

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collectively claimed four million lives, while there is increasing incidences of terrorism all over Africa. Hawkins (2008) therefore notes that the conflict or crisis related death since the end of the Cold War in Africa was over 9 million and huge cases refugee crises recorded as contained in UNHCR Statistical Database, (2009). Alao, Atere and Alao, (2012) observe that the Boko Haram insurgence in Nigeria has led to unusual migration in Nigeria while not only non-indigenes but indigenes are migrating to perceived safer territory, thereby compound the challenges of the host communities. This statistics above underscores millions of 'stealth death'.

The situation becomes pathetic when responses locally and internationally have largely failed to institutionalize regimes of enduring peace in most of these nations. The adoption Western models of conflict resolution could not prevent the resurgence of direct violence. The victims were traumatized while the ability of governments to stem the tide is becoming doubtful due partly to lack of sincerity of purpose. This scenario cannot but leave the citizenry or victims of the direct violence frustrated when there is no effective legal means of redressing the wrongs and there is the need for self preservation. The shortcomings associated with Western conflict resolution mechanisms often adopted by governments in Africa the interrogation of traditional models with specific consideration of the involvement of native gods in resolving contemporary conflicts in Africa.

Statement of Problem

The prevalence of conflicts in Africa and the inability of the existing institutional mechanisms to achieve enduring peace is a challenge that motivated this study to examine an aspect of traditional models of conflict resolution, that is, the involvement of native gods. The goal is to evolve an effective conflict resolution method(s) that will complement the existing ones to guarantee smooth post conflict peace building and minimize resurgence of violent conflicts

Objectives

a. To examine the weakness of Western models of conflict resolution in protracted conflicts in Africa
b. To analyze the nature African traditional models of conflict resolution.
c. To assess the place of small gods, an aspect of African traditional model in conflict resolution.
d. To evaluate the constraints of adopting the intervention of small gods in conflict resolution in Africa.

METHODOLOGY

The paper was a descriptive but qualitative research investigating the involvement of native gods and relied on secondary data sources consisting of relevant text books, journals, Internet sources and documentary evidences. The data obtained were content analyzed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The endemic nature of conflicts in Africa and its multi dimensional nature require effective combination of theories to provide a solid foundation for its analysis and intervention strategies

towards achieving enduring peace. Any theory adopted cannot but consider the nature of conflicts in Africa, the causative factors and why peaceful resolution of some conflicts has been a mirage. Gurr (1970) concentrates on frustration that could occasion aggression while Easton (1954) adopts system approach to illustrate the relationship existing among parts of the system and the contribution of each of the parts to the sustenance of the whole.

Structural functionalism that is adopted for this study was popularized by Radcliffe – Brown (1952) focuses on explaining the basic functions of the political structures in a political system. It attempts to examine the relationships between the structures on the one hand and the structures and the whole on the other hand. In this sense, the theory assumes that it is the positive contribution of each structure that helps to sustain the political system.

The theory advances that two primary functions exist in any society. These are the latent and manifest functions. Further insight into the theory was provided by Almond (1965) identifying functional requirements of the political system and the contributions of these functions towards systemic stability. He categorizes these into input and output functions. The input functions include political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation and aggregation as well as political communication. The output consists of rule-making, rule-application and rule-adjudication.

Almond (1965) therefore posits that a stable political system is achieved when the flow of inputs and its conversion to outputs is done in such a way that little stress is encountered with the existence an inbuilt mechanism to accommodate the strains thereby creating a situation in which the political system is in a state of equilibrium.

The state of equilibrium that is not achieved within the political systems in Africa accounted for most of the conflicts, crises, and wars. It could be observed that the existing structures such political, economic, social, religious among other have to a large extent failed to perform their functions efficiently though Africa is richly blessed with natural resources, good climate and one of the least disaster prone regions globally. On the other hand, Africa is the poorest region in the world with high rate of unemployment and prevalence of avoidable diseases and death. These, coupled with poor governance could not but leave the citizenry frustrated. Without a legal means of addressing the grievances, issues like land and chieftaincy, access to resources as well as the careless handling of issues by governments and lack of strong political will to confront the issues involved led to protracted conflicts. Indeed, it is the language of violence that is effectively understood and catches the attentions of governments in Africa that demands urgent reaction. Hence, conflicting parties, through Western adversarial mechanism of conflict resolution are often pacified rather than reconciled. Suppression of violence is misconstrued for peace while conflicting parties are left dissatisfied waiting for the next possible opportunity for resurgence of violence particular by the victims of the last violence seeking opportunity for vengeance.

It is this gap in the inability of government to chart a peaceful course for resolution of conflicts in Africa that motivates the interrogation of the involvement of native gods which is just a process in traditional models. Hence, the intervention of native gods in conflict resolution in Africa could be regarded as latent function from Racliffe Brown perspective, as no existing law in any nations provided for such a role but that does not mean that it does exist. The theory has largely been criticized largely on account of not been able to explain differences in a changing world as it looks

at the society as static whereas the political system generate and produces power relation that can be conflictual continually.

LITERATURE REVIEW

'Conflict' is derived from 'confligere', a Latin word that means 'shocking together'. According to Galtung (2010) cited in Webel and Galtung (2010) the goals or interests of the parties are the things 'shocking together', when the realization of one excludes the realization of others. This position agree with Lussier and Achua, (2007), and Nicolaides, (2008) among others that conflict is the outcome of divergence of values or the pursuit of real or perceived incompatible goals by different groups. Bercoritch and Zartman (2009) definition of conflict largely capture the focus of this study that it is a struggle over values and claims to scare status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponent are to neutralize, injure or/and eliminate the rivals. Adekanye (2009) analysis of conflict provided an insight that three factors must be present, these are, the pre-dispositional, precipitant/accelerators and conflict triggers or catalytic factors before conflict assume a violent dimension while the early warning signals are often disregarded or ignored in Africa..

Miall (1992) suggests that conflict exists only where the participants perceive it as such, while the parties might be States or significant elements of the population within States and they consider the outcome of the conflict to be extremely important. Jeanty (2011) therefore observes that the way the participants in a disagreement perceive this threat determines to a great extent how heated the conflict becomes.

Otite (1999) captures the nature of conflicts in Africa by identifying seven main factors as sources of conflict that are relevant to this study. These include the land space and the resources available, disputed jurisdiction of certain traditional rulers, the creation of L.G councils and the location of headquarters. Others are ethnic and individual or sectional competition over access to scare political and economic resources, micro and macro social structures, population growth and expansionist tendencies to sustain ethnic–bound occupations and the perception of disregard for cultural symbols and the pollution of cultural practices.

Conflict dynamics in Africa is further complicated as rightly observed by Otite (1999) because of the first three of the four other forces. First, is the encapsulation of ethnic identities defined by language and cultural symbolism which predated colonial artificial boundaries in Africa. Second, the excessive attachment to the symbols and sentiments of colonially created administrative regions as well as post- colonial state and Local Government boundaries. Third, the socio-territorial, political, economic inequalities, and disabilities. Lastly, the effects of politicization of religious pluralism and the fanatism of religious practitioner that of late manifested in terrorism leading untimely death and loss of properties.

Conflicts need not always be seen from negative perspectives, Kriesberg, (1998) and Foster (2000) and Lederach, (1995) sees it as a positive agent of social change. To a large extent, without moral consideration, conflict provides employment for the militants as found in the Niger Delta, and other war or conflict zones in Africa. In addition, it encourages the growth of industries specialized in the production of arms and ammunition, thereby further generating income and employment. With respect to this study, conflicts in Africa have been largely destructive but Deutsch and

Coleman, (2000) add that the manner in which conflict is handled determines whether it will be constructive or destructive. When conflicts are carefully and skillfully handled, Deutsch (1973) among others note that opportunities might be opened for personal growth, and create the change needed to improve interpersonal relations. Failure however to handle conflicts with care and tact could lead to civil strife or full-scale war between warring communities or nations.

Linking causative factors to peace process, Dibie (2004) notes that conflicts rest on four premises particular in Africa. These include the fact that causes of social and political problems often reside within socio-political institutions and direct violence can be a useful way of forcing problems to the attention of government. In addition, change and disequilibrium are not to be shunned or avoided while change in institutional behaviors could help in resolving social and political problems.

The implication therefore is that a thorough analysis of any particular conflict as well as a change in institutional mechanism to handling it could help to achieve an enduring peace. Hence, the position of Galtung (2010) cited in Webel and Galtung (2010) that governments in Africa often adopt security approach to peace which is largely the adoption of Western models of conflict resolution needs be revisited. The approach to a significant level has been failing particularly in a situation of demonstrated inability on the part of government to develop sufficient political will to confront the issues of conflict. In some conflicts, governments become a subtle party rather that serving as a neutral arbiter like in ethno-religious cases in Nigeria In other cases, it manifests as a direct conflict between the government and its citizens as in Egypt, Libya, and Algeria among others.

Uwazie, (1991) demostrates that disputants covered in his study identified deficiencies in the Western model of conflict resolution that he refers to as "state system" that led to searching for more satisfactory forms of dispute management rooted in traditional models. This explains why this paper examined the intervention of native gods in institutionalizing enduring peace.

Western Models of Conflict Resolution and Inherent the Challenges
Western model is one of the two prominent models of conflict resolution in Africa while the other is traditional models. The method is regarded as Western because it does not involve from the historical past of the people in Africa, but adopted from foreign sources. There are so many terms interchangeably used in Western models of conflict resolution. Nordlinder (1972) adopted the term 'conflict regulation' and identified six practices. These include stable government coalition as adopted in Malaya from 1957-1969. The principle of proportionality adopted in Lebanon between fourteen religious sects and Austrian Republic, as well as the mutual veto that was extensively and rigorously applied from 1945-1966 during Austria's Grand coalition.

Also, government intervention often take the form mediation, arbitration, and conciliation which have been severally adopted in resolving many intra and inter ethnic conflicts with varying degree of success such as Ife/Modakeke conflict in Nigeria among others. In other instances, intervention by government takes the form setting up commission or judicial commission of inquiry as found inform Zango-Kafar, Bauchi, Offa-Erinle, Ife-modakeke among others in Nigeria. Depoliticization requires conflict group leaders to agree not to involve the government in public policy areas which

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impinge upon the segments' values or interests as found in Lebanon. Compromise is another practice as observed by Nordlinder and it involves mutual adjustment of conflicting interests and values and lastly is concession.

The roles of International Organization, governmental and non-governmental agencies are clearly visible in conflict resolution in Africa as third party intervention. Such interventions include those of United Nation in Congo, Egypt, Libya Sierra Leone and Rwanda among others. Same is true of African Union and Economic Community of West Africa intervention in Chad, Cote D'Ivore, Liberia, and Mali. This manifested in the role of Professor Ibrahim Gambari mission in Cyprus. Other international agencies that are non-governmental in nature such as the Norwegian Church Aid's Humanitarian and Peace-making Work in Mali (Adekanye, (1997), and Peace Monitor in Somali and the Academic Associates Peace Works (AAPW) that intervened and to a large extent successful brought about relative peace in Igbo Ora conflict, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Mitchell (1993) acknowledged problem–solving workshops, collaborative analytical problem-solving or third party consultations as procedures for managing conflicts. Galtung (2010) cited in Webel and Galtung noted other models of intervention such as avoidance, facilitation, mediation, counseling and therapy, organizational development, conciliation, quasi political procedures, informal tribunals, arbitration criminal and civil justice systems. Adjudication on the other hand includes the decision making by a judge in a court of law which is final, binding and enforceable.

One of the basic weaknesses of the Western models according to Lanek (1999) in Brock-Utne (2000) and Bob-Manuel (2000) is that it emphasizes establishing guilt and executing retribution and punishment without reference to the victim. Also, the approaches neglect the wider families or future reincorporation of the offender back into the community. In order words, the emphasis is on justice without sufficient consideration of post resolution relationship. In addition, the Western models are largely adversarial and evidences must be direct, specific and directed at implicating the opposing party.

Furthermore, Western models as adopted in African context is largely rooted in government mediating in conflict with emphasis on security approach to peace rather peace approach to security. This could only be understood based on governments effort to curb direct violence rather than the need to ensure peaceful resolution that will to a large extent meet the basic needs of the conflicting parties. In effect, security forces are deplored to suppress violence and government hurriedly brings the conflicting parties together in a round table conference based on their own agenda (Galtung 2010). The implication is the wrong assumption that the crisis has been resolved through imposed treaty while it waits for the available opportunity to explode, leading to the urge for vengeance by the party that suffered the greatest damage and activate resurgence of direct violence.

The demonstrated lack of political will by many governments in Africa (particularly in intra-national conflicts) to confront the issues of conflict and remain neutral in such a way that the conflicting parties will see them as transparent and fair is a special challenge in Africa. Ethnic, political and religious considerations as well as personality involved in the conflict tend to be of superior consideration beyond institutionalizing a regime of enduring peace. This explains why reports of investigation into conflict were suppressed as rightly observed by Bogoro (2009)

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among others. The weaknesses of the Western approaches to conflict resolution in Africa to a large extent calls for interrogating an alternate approach rooted in traditional model with specific emphasis on a narrow aspect revolving around the roles of native gods.

Traditional Models of Conflict Resolution and the Relevance of Native Gods

The notion of peace in African indigenous traditions encompasses a conscious and deliberate effort to ensure communal wellness and cooperation by all, seeing everybody as belonging to a single family. On the other hand, the notion of war in traditional African society is not to fight to extinction while as Al-Mazur (2005) documented that Africans have 'short memory of hate' This pre-colonial understanding of war and peace process accommodated the need for harmony among the various groups or entities that lived in a community as well as between them and their neighbours. Conflict resolution or management practices are regarded as rooted in tradition if they have been in existence and practiced for an extended period and have evolved within societies rather than being imitative or the product of external importation (Zartman, 2000 and Akpuru-Aja, 2007). It goes further to imply that there is consensus among the group regarding the acceptance of such practices.

The agents of peace in African setting include indigenous personalities, kings or emirs and chiefs, ancestors, priests in charge of native gods, elders and family heads, age grades associations, secret societies while women generally played prominent roles. In addition, music and proverbs were often used to reflect the mood of the society in creating a conducive atmosphere for sustaining peaceful co-existence or aggravating the existing tensed situation.

The traditional notion of God before the advent of Christianity or Islamic religions is that He is the Almighty, powerful, omnipresent and omniscience, so highly placed that mortal being cannot directly approach or worshipped. This, to a large extent brought to bear the idea of reaching or worshipping God through various intermediaries known as native gods. These native gods were and are still identified with different aspects of human endeavour in many modern African societies. For example, Vendel, (ND) observed that the God *Atum*, among the Egyptian was believed to have created himself and then made *Shu*, (the god of the air) and *Tefnut,* (goddess of moisture and rain). They in turn had the twins, *Geb,* (the earth-god), and *Nut*, (the goddess of the sky) through which other one hundred and fifteen Egyptian gods and goddesses emerged.

Idowu, (2007:56) notes that God among the Yorubas in Nigeria is called among other names *Olodumare or Olorun* and noted that:

> *He is supreme over all on earth and in heaven, acknowledged by all the divinities as the Head to whom all authority belongs and all allegiance is due. . . His status of supremacy is absolute. Things happen when He approves, things do not come to pass if He disapproves.*

Orisha or "head guardians" or native gods are considered as ministers of *Olodumare* and serve as intermediaries between *Olodumare* and humanity and are up to 1,700 according to Idowu (2007). Among such are the *Ogun,* the god of iron, war, justice, *Orunmila,* the oracle divinity, and *Sango*, the god of thunder and lightning.

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Though Kenya has a large Christian population, Finke, (2003) reported that the Kikuyu equally worship native gods. The omnipotent God is called call *Ngai* or spelt *Mogai* , not a distant God like in the West but has human characteristics while thunder is interpreted to be the movement of God and his abode is on mount Kenya. Sacrifices and offerings were mostly done by priests facing Mount Kenya at a high place.

The basic characteristics of native gods apart from serving as intermediaries between the ultimate God and humanity include that he is dreaded and as such worshipped with utmost reference and fear even beyond the notion of God among the Christian and Islamic faithful. The diviner or priest takes time to consult the spirit world and explained the supernatural aspect of events and makes issues associated with conflict convincing, intelligible and therefore acceptable to the parties. He pronounces judgement, prescribes the sacrifices to atone for wrong doing and the anger of the ancestors as rightly observed by Afigbo (1972), Adewoye (1977) and Cavender (1988), thereby making the oracle an invaluable means of conflict resolution/ management among other functions.

Furthermore, his pronouncement is considered as final over the affairs of adherents and it is believed that whatever he says will definitely come to pass and this imposes the fear of toying with the gods. In addition, failure to comply the gods' injunction brings about instantaneous negative repercussion. He is worshipped through offering of sacrifices while specific period(s) in the year is often set aside for the general worship. Also, this does not diminish occasional worship/sacrifice as may be ordained by the priest in consultation with the oracle while its authority must not be questioned. In some instances, specific families or lineages have the monopoly to serve as priest over the worship of the gods. In pre-modern era in Africa, native gods served as an instrument of societal stability while the priests served as principal consultants to traditional rulers and even the people in general.

Native gods in nearly all African societies constituted an important component of peace process because of the belief in them and the demonstrated prowess in ensuring that their pronouncements come to pass. Therefore, the priests of the native gods serve as mediator between conflict individuals/groups and the ancestor spirits through occultism. The intervention of the native gods constitute largely the last stage in conflict resolution through divination, incantation, administration of oaths or/and drinking of concussion, sacrifices and prayers to appease gods.

This explains why Zartman (2000.1) observes that "*some of Africa's reputation in conflict management has historic and even contemporary footnotes ....*". This paper agrees with Busia, (1967) in Akpuru-Aja, (2007) that one glaring noticeable trend of traditional methods of conflict resolution in Africa is that there are so many similarities in the procedures often adopted to resolve differences among various ethnic groups. This might have informed the overgeneralization by Western scholars that Africa is assumed to be homogenous.

One prominent feature of this model of conflict resolution/management is that it goes beyond the limit of Western models as they are holistic approaches to peace, highly inclusive, emphasizing genuine reconciliation and concern about enhancing the quality of future relations. Lanek (1999) in Brock-Utne (2000) and Bob-Manuel (2000) observe that the indigenous conflict resolution methods as illustrated in *Acholi* method of peace (Acholi is a Luo speaking tribe in northern Uganda) as well as in Igbo and Yoruba community in Nigeria, is cooperative and does not give

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room for the accused to deny charges because of the fear of the native gods and the then prevailing consensual norms for peace.

Such consensual norm among the Yoruba in Nigeria is called *parapo* (togetherness), *Ubuntu* in Zulu language, *Ujama* in Kiswahili, *Udo Obodo* in Ibo and *Zama Cikin Lumana* in Hausa language. This manifests in unalloyed commitment of individuals to their community, and the oneness in the belief of the spirit world as presented by the priests of the native gods and served as a symbol of unity. It may be argued that the supposed unity is imposed for fear of instant repercussion but the study noted that the arrangement provided a means of ensuring orderly society while modern laws are equally enforced and obeyed for fear of punishment.. Hence, the fear of sorcery or divine punishment assisted in maintaining sanity. The need therefore to be truthful by parties to conflict, without a conscious effort to implicate the opposing party that provided a suitable environment to confront the issues of conflict to achieve enduring peace that may be lacking in western adversarial approaches.

For instance, in Achilo tradition, the resolution of conflict ends with a great ceremony called "*Mato Oput*" which is the traditional drinking of a bitter herb of Oput tree administered by the priest of their native god. Lanek (1999) observed that the ceremony involves that the guilty acknowledging responsibilities, repenting, ask for forgiveness, pay compensation and reconciled with the victim's family through sharing the bitter drink. The drink symbolizes the psychological bitterness that prevailed in the minds of the parties in conflict situation as this ceremony covered all the offences.

In the Kidepo valley of Equatorial Guinean, peacemaking at the grassroots among the communities that had coexisted peacefully before the relationship assumed direct violence was presented in Brock-Utne (2000). These include that each member group of the communities often began their attempts of peacemaking by first identifying the root causes of the problem, convened meetings that may last two or three days in isolation, assign and important roles for opinion leaders and council of elders. In addition, the priest in charge of the native god concluded the resolution process through the use of rituals, symbols and interpretation of myth. The priest identified the particular type of cow or goat that must be sacrificed to cleanse away the evils of conflict from societies and finally placing curses by the elders to deter the youth from continuous raid as it is believed that such action could to lead to mysterious death.

For instance, Obi, (ND) observed that the Ogwugwu Shrines of Okija, was a place where people with disputes in their personal transactions have gone for adjudication by the gods. The guilty party usually died within a year and the priests at the shrine would demand the dead body and all material possessions of the victim. Prominent personalities in the likes of former Governor of Anambra state, Chris Ngige was alleged to have patronized the shrine.

Professor Idowu Odeyemi, President, International Council for IFA Religion, representing the voice of African Traditional Religion in Nigeria in PM News (2014) demonstrated the continued relevance of this body when he lamented the exclusion of the indigenous religious practitioners from nominations to the ongoing National Conference and demanded at least three slots. Also, on Thursday May 22, 2014, he gathered seven hundred traditionalists under the aegis of Traditional

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Council of Ifa at Ibadan, the Oyo State capital for an open air Iwure (prayer/intercession) and special divination session for the peace, unity and survival of Nigeria. He called for the release of abducted Chibok girls declaring that the result of the divination required sacrifice.

Bretton (1967) in Zartman (2000) notes how Ghana's Nkrumah relied on fetish practices to retain power, and also noted that witchcraft, divination, secret society and ritual feature prominently in governance. The same was true of Eyadema of Togo, and Tubman of Liberia. Realizing the importance of native gods, February 10 is set aside as a public holiday in Benin Republic for voodoo worship. This, to a large extent reflects the relevance of native gods even in contemporary African society.

Furthermore, the conflict over Otuocha land between Aguleri-Umuleri in Anambra East Local Government Area, Nigeria defied all resolution efforts initially. The case went up to the Queens Privy Council in London and back at home, up to the Supreme Court in 1982 as reported by Nwolise, (2005). The intervention of *Ohaneze Ndigbo* was able to restore peace as this was finally wrapped up with oath taking between the two communities as well as other communities in Anambra East Local Government Area in order to avoid further war within the environ. Though the Christian groups organized prayer session, the involvement of the native god was prominent in the oath taking before five different gods representing each of the communities essential to the peace process while *Iko mmee* (blood cleansing rites followed) was conducted. This same arrangement has been successfully applied in Okrika in South-South Nigeria that made Alagoa (1998) to observe in respect of the final resolution of Aguleri-Umuleri, Umunebo- Umuokuzu and Okrika conflicts that:

> *The peace arbitration between the communities did not achieve the immediate and complete reconciliation expected in former times but the invocations and rituals performed by the Okrika arbitrators against violation of the peace has been as effective, if not more so, than the force that the mobile policemen deployed by the government.*

Nevertheless, it is important to observe that tradition is ever changing as it cannot be absolved from the forces of globalization. Hence, it undergoes slow and steady transformation to accommodate the dictate of modern society as will be reflected in the challenges of the adoption of native gods.

The Challenges of Adopting Native Gods as A Means of Resolving Contemporary Conflicts in Africa

The resurgence of protracted and deep-rooted conflicts in Africa is a manifestation defective resolution mechanism. The adoption of traditional models, with specific reference to the intervention of the native gods is subjected to various challenges including methodological constraints that data collection pose as rightly observed by Zartman (2000). There is no mechanism that could be adopted to study all the cases in Africa not minding the procedural similarities found in all cases. To study the application of native gods in conflict resolution in just one nation is difficult not to talk of fifty four nations in Africa because each ethnic group has a distinct mode of involving native gods in conflict resolution/management. The implication is that

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the dissimilarities in various communities may lead to complexity in the adoption of the models, thereby confining the relevance to narrow or restricted jurisdiction.

Stemming from the above, most of the processes involved in the incorporation of native gods are rooted in oral traditions which have not received sufficient documentation. They are governed with mysticism and might not be open enough for research documentation as well as difficult to improve upon for general application. This agrees with Abel (1982) and Merry (1982) that the indigenous legal system as reflected in the interventionof native gods in this instance relies on unwritten, oral and flexible precedents or rules. It is therefore often regarded as babaric, satanic and could be subjected to false claim by the priests since it does not follow a strict written code or be verifiable.

One glaring set back of the intervention of the native gods in conflict resolution is that it cannot stand on its own but a part or usually the last process of traditional models of conflict resolution. In addition, it is largely applicable to local conflicts within the same ethnic group or in few cases, where other ethnic groups prefer to submit self to the same process and not national or international conflicts. Also, it is not in all cases of intra- ethnic group that the traditional models proof effective not to talk of the intervention of native gods like Offa/Erinle conflict in Kwara State and Ife/Modakeke conflict in Osun State, Nigeria among others.

The advent of Western civilization particularly with respect to Christianity and the spread of Islam, coupled with modern administrative structure significantly eroded the relevance of the native gods within African society as also noted by Isichei (1973). Awolalu, (1975) added that the native gods are intricately connected with the religious life of the adherents while it runs contrary to the tenets of Islam and Christianity though some clandestinely patronize them for spiritual support, healing and protection from real or imaginary evil forces.

This agrees with Okere. (2013) that the

> *indigenous religion was condemned as idolatry; their Gods were but demons or fetishes; their ancestors were lost souls, having lived and died outside the Church; their feasts and ceremonies were all idolatrous and pagan; their dances were immoral; their diviners were sorcerers; their medicine was magic and quackery; their languages were hopelessly tone-infested cacophonies, while their names were unpronounceable gibberish for which the canonized names of European canonized saints had to be substituted.*

In addition, the political elites or leaders have significantly manipulated traditional institutions and practices and reinvented traditions to mobilize and sustain support for their selfish end. Examples are found in Nkrumah's Ghana, Tubman in Liberia, and Abacha in Nigeria among many other African leaders as they perverted traditions for their political gains. The perversion has adulterated traditional practices and weakened the fear associated with the failure to comply with oaths. For instance, before the final successful resolution of Umnebo-Umuokuzu conflict, Nwolise (2005) documented that the Chief Priest of Obinze Community on account of greed, secretly unbounded the oath administered on one person involved in the land dispute while he didn't die before the stipulated time. However, both the man on who false oath was unbounded eventually died as well as his son so also the Chief Priest died. This explains that the mechanism is not fool proof and could be abused regardless of the repercussion.

Stemming from the above, greed and the urge to get rich quick have led to the growth of falsehood making the relevance of the native gods intervention in conflict resolution questionable. Many shrines in contemporary societies have been established by self professed priests where innocent victims were manipulated and dispossessed of their wealth. This has subjected it to abuse as reflected in the case Odozi Obodo Society in Abakiliki, Eboyin State, Nigeria (http://www.nairaland.com/392639/barbarous-acts-okija-shrine, 2010). It was alleged that as many as 400 people were killed in 1959 by a society that was seen the "watchdogs" of Abakiliki, to "safeguard peace and morals. Same is the replica of Okija shrine discovered in the Atakumosa West Local Government Area, Osun state, Nigeria where the fake priest named Aliyu with his aides constructed graves, masquerades and other idols in the shrine to terrify his unsuspecting "customers" by bringing money for sacrifices to appease the gods in order to answer their prayers (The Herald (2013). In effect, the gradual erosion of traditional values and consensual norms that once held the traditional societies together constituted a serious challenge to the efficacy of native gods in conflict resolution.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that the efficacy of the native gods intervention in conflict management/resolution in Africa could be more potent than modern mechanisms because it constitutes part of the religious life of the adherents, restore relationship very close to pre-conflict era and the fear of repercussion enhance compliance with agreed terms. The arrangement was largely effective for intra ethnic conflict, when the religious lives of the groups tolerated such a practice and the conflicting groups were willing to subject themselves though subject to abuses.
The study recommended the incorporation of traditional models into the Western models where practicable, particularly when the involvement of native gods does not negate the religious life of the conflicting groups. This arrangement when successfully applied in intra-ethnic conflicts could institutionalize peace believing that if such conflicts are minimized, there is tendency for relative peace to prevail within the larger society.

The study further recommended that governments and political leaders' should develop the right platform governed by sincerity of purpose and sufficient political will in supporting peaceful resolution of conflict whether through incorporation of the two models or adoption of one of the two models. It has been observed that not in all cases of conflict that the Western models could be applicable; the Local Communities should be encouraged to development appropriate strategies to meet their local needs without excessive politicization.

Finally, it recommended that the government should focus on early warning signals to minimize the destructive nature of violent conflicts in Africa as various conflict resolution mechanisms are not totally effective. Therefore, prevention is better cure and this will minimize lengthy time and huge resources expended on managing direct violence with avoidable loss of lives, properties and the psychological trauma suffered by the victims of conflicts.

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