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WITCHCRAFT AS CONJECTURES OF CULTURAL IDENTITY: THE IMPERATIVES OF AFRICAN FOLKLORE

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Abstract

The history of thought and culture is a changing pattern of great liberating ideas which inevitably has change the world into different phenomenological assumptions. It is under this promptly that we contend that the concept of witchcraft is an anthropomorphic concept which has many variables of interpretations. Witchcraft happens to be in all culture, with moderations of epistemology in different faces of history. It therefore, interchanges in different cultural identities. In Africa, it takes a new turn of influence with redefining concepts within the structure of folklores and Pentecostal dogmas. Thus, it is within this trajectory that it re-orients in the pseudo-history of African epistemology. Witchcraft is multi-faceted topic of interest and an inter-disciplinary study of history, philosophy, anthropology, folklore, sociology, etc, and as we are entering into the twenty-first century, we must redefine it as to meet with tide of new age in African development. Witchcraft is phenomenological invocation of alleged supernatural powers to control people or events. It is the use of magic powers to influence or prevent events. It mostly occurs as a misfortune against people. So, this work is a socio-political and philosophical approaches to the concept of witchcraft in Africa. It critically examines the impediments of the negative activistic tendencies that occurred from the therapeutic inquisition from the folklorist and Pentecostal dogma in Africa ontology. The findings of this paper therefore, supports the thesis that the religious neo-Pentecostalism and African folklores have created the negative hegemonic environment that abuses children as witchcraft and must be punished by law. This brings disharmony within families units in Africa. It brought the intensity of public policy that hinders genuine African development in 21st Century. It connotes lack of trust among individuals in African communities.

Keywords: Witchcraft, folklore, Pentecostal Dogma, Phenomenology, Epistemology Heteronometivity of Culture.

Introduction

In this work, we contend that the hegemonic environment of culture in African epistemology has been plagued with the abuses from the folklores and neo-Pentecostalism Dogma. So, as we enter the twenty first century we must redefine our conception of witchcraft as largely misplaced in African cultural identity into viable assumptions of epistemology that would stand to be globally accepted in the Heteronometivity of culture.

In the opinion of Mbiti,(1975:91) "Wicthcraft is the belief in the manifestation of supernatural powers which maybe innate in a person, inherited or acquired in any of several ways". It has

various variables of interpretations. Some see it as a form of mystical or supernatural power that cause harm including death. While others see it as the art or craft of being wise in doing things extraordinarily in more than human expectations but in most cases, it occurs in the negative form of life, in the destruction of human activities.

In Africa, so many things have been said about witchcraft and that it has some level; of manifestations in human activities. Some signs show that you are under witchcraft attack and this includes: being pressed or suppressed down when you are sleeping. This is called evil visitation. Some people also become witches or wizards by inheritance from the parents; some are by initiation through friends or through business deals by accepting to join the clubs or associations. Africa is characterized by a multiplicity cultures and traditions in which there is a general belief in witchcraft.

In the stereotypically "traditional" view, witchcraft is generally seen as people ideologue. It has been sarcasm of cultural inuendos of people who live in the rural areas and mostly who are poor. The tradition accepted as a vice of horror in the society. So, for this reason there is the element of sociopolitical chauvinism about witchcraft and its paraphanelia in Africa by the organs of the folklores and some Pentecostal religious beliefs. These groups assumed to be powerful and have power over the witches and wizard in Africa, through sanctifications and outright destruction of the witches. Thus, within this understanding, there is a classical concept that they are living in assumption of hypothesis that someone is out-rightly a witch and must be exorcised from such negative vices. Hence, this particular claim will be subject of the intriguing notion of rightful authenticity of one's own claim that someone is a witch, especially in relation to evidence from the folklore beliefs and also by the Pentecostal Christian dogmas.

Literarily, it is under this consideration that this work is mainly based on the scope and subjectivity of witchcraft and to counter some of their cultural assumptions which created the hegemonic environment that abuses children in the society. So, it is in this panoply, that this work seeks to understand the epistemological model of witchcraft in Africa. It goes to find the theoretical assumption of the concept of witchcraft in African folklores and the beliefs of the Pentecostal dogmas. What considerations does it give in destroying the society through this fetish believes, rather than building it up on positive peace.

So, the purpose of this study therefore, is to reconstruct the society for a positive peace building, through the formulation of a new epistemology of reconstructionism in Africa that will be based on the hereafter hertronometivity of culture.

Theoretical Framework

The Imperatives of Phenomenological Reduction

This work is purely based on the concept of phenomenological reduction. It is an influence reaching out in area of witchcraft, which is a process of phenomenal reductionism in human life. Phenomenology has been applied to numerous disciplines like Aesthetics, Anthropology, Philosophy of religion, sociology, Psychology, Psychiatry, Psychotheraphy and human personality. So far as the contributions of phenomenology are these: it has great impact on human life to the point of admonishing intentionally based on the object of the consciousness.

Thus, an idea refers to the object which it represents a desire refers to the object desired and a judgement refers to as proposition which is acknowledged.

Hence, it is upon this trajectory that we should discuss the phenomenon of witchcraft in African epistemology. How it is being regarded by the folklorist and the Pentecostal pastors in the exhibition of misfortune in African homonometivity of culture. What really ascribed this concept of witchcraft to be accepted in the moral ground of African ethics. All phenomenological intentionality refers to object; that is to say that every psychic phenomenon in consciousness is an act which refers to an object beyond its own consciousness, but the object remains immanent in consciousness, for it is not merely a target at which intentional awareness aims. So, there is no consciousness of hearing without some object that is being heard, no consciousness of believing without something which is believed, no act of helping without that for which one possess hope, no act of striving without that for which one strives; no joyousness (as a mental experience) without some object about which one can be joyous.
Apart from Franz Brentano, Husserl's phenomenological ideas owed much to the works of Brentano, Stumpf, Descartes, Kant and even much lesser to other philosophers. He thought of phenomenology as a descriptive analysis of subjective processes or as the intuitive study of essences. Every other thing are bracketed out from the realm of consciousness, thus, the battle any of Husserlians is: "to the things themselves" phenomenal are the manifestations or the ways in which objects present themselves through their appearances.

Husserl believes in the method of phenomenological reduction or abstraction and analysis of correlation between the phenomenon of recognition and the object of cognition. So, if this is the case, where do we place the cultural or religious assumption of witchcraft in Africa? Does it really coincide with the concept of the Husserl phenomenological reductionism?

This is part of the essence of this research work to see whether it corroborates to the reality of consciousness in Africa. Witchcraft is a phenomenon of consciousness in Africa and requires us to ascertain the truth validity of its authenticity in African epistemology.

The Scope and Subjectivity of Witchcraft in Africa

Suffice to say that witchcraft is concerned about phenomenological assumptions of intentionality of psychic ego. It enunciates a set of specialized epistemology towards the exhibitions of supernatural powers and claims of such cultural inuendos in a heteronometivity of cultures(s). Though with reference to the respective culture of homonometivity, it reclines its force in exhibiting in a particular class model of existence.

Going by this conception, the world is gradually evolving and there are numerous innovations to this which occurs in respective cultures. Unlike in the olden days when witchcraft is often view as a spells of negative forces of misfortune, today, there are different forms of witchcrafts which are used in the positive sides of life. Rather than as wicked act of drinking blood, it has evolved into something good, but is still from the same source. They are used for protection of oneself and love ones.

Thus, is upon this consideration that we have the following classifications of witchcrafts.

1. Astral Projection

Astral projection (or astral travel) is a term used in esotericism to describe the experience of the body transcending to the existence of the soul in a trance of consciousness into the space, capable of travelling outside it throughout the universe. It is simply moving one's spirit out of your body, travelling around on a purpose for a mission.

In Africa, this is formally associated with the concept of metempsychosis, a method of transcending into the animal world by into a lion, dog, crocodile etc., as an exhibition of powers for something of a particular interest in the society. People transmigrate into animal.

2. Horoscope Reading

This is form of a forecast based on the relative stride of time on the stars and planets with some person's birth, to bring a positive result about that person's future. This is often seen as harmless but in actual sense, it is not. It is very addictive, and in most cases, it often leads to witchcraft.

This has often been the projections in which the African folklorist and the Pentecostal pastors used in abusing children and adults as witches in Africa. "The hybridization of folk and neo-Pentecostal dogma, which is also evidence in Nollywood movies has been blamed for the recent reinforcement practice of witchcraft in Africa, specifically in Eket, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria" (Akhilomen, 2006:200). But the current torrent of witchcraft accusation has shifted from adults to children, and this has become a lure of making miracles by them through the accusations and sanctifications of the people by the folklorists and the Pentecostal pastors. Dealing with these issues requires urgent intervention in order for the children to be protected from the accusers and abusers.

This is also very antithetical to the subject of the fundamental human rights of citizens in Nigeria where the incident mostly occurs. The children and people have right for the preservation of life and autonomy individual space of existence in their places of abode. What is the subjective autonomy of epistemology that grants permission to the torturing of these individual as witches in their respective community. What is the epistemology of conceivable province of knowledge and human concern in which they authenticate their ability in judging others as witches in the society? This is the reason why we shall survey the development of epistemology and articulate the principles that should guide us to the growing concerns of epistemology still relevant to human concerns in which they authenticate their ability in judging others as witches in the society. This is the reason why "we shall survey the development of epistemology and articulate the principles that should guide us to the growing concerns of epistemology still relevant to human concerns" (Ozumba, 2017:3).

Really, it is upon this that we will determine a genuine ideology that will enable us to create a position that will appear authentic to the society of individual. So authenticity is purely based on the concept of a genuine epistemology that will be based on the heretronometivity of culture. So to accept the hegemonic culture that has been utilized particularly by these neo-Pentecostal pastors in Southern Nigeria, who use their positions to influence the parents in believing that their children practice witchcraft is a complete aberration of a genuine African epistemology in 21st Century. This hinges to the fact that there is no result of a misfortune that

have be fallen on any child parent that has proven directly to occur from witchcraft. There is no empirical verification proven that there are evidences of witchcraft and it is from those children.

3. Telepathy

This is in consideration to the communication of thoughts or idea by means other than the known senses. It is a psychic power from the meditation in which you allow the flow of thought in your mind stream. Of course, this is very dangerous because one does not know the exact flow of thought. The flow might be demonic, and it doesn't give the accurate information as an object of interpretation.

Our worry stems from the abstract, esoteric and very specialized concerns of epistemology as practiced by the folklorists and Pentecostal pastors who utilizes their metaphysical domain to thwart history. They lay emphasis on so many things to stereotype their victim, "the question that keeps echoing in my mind is, is it not possible to reduce epistemological concern to existential questions and issues" (Ozumba, 2017:1). The fact is that man is always in a state of anguish and despair by trying to solve all its existential problems. Thus, in trying to do this, one falls into a categorical mistake by being led by charlatans and false prophets who capitalized in that for their personal interests.

When we talk about witchcraft, we are inquiring into the relevance of epistemology in the objectification of the concept. What really ascribed that it exists and it has certain effect on humanity. For this, we infer that any epistemological inquiry that hopes to address the myriads of problems associated with the concept of witchcraft has solved many sidedness of reality that impinges on man's existentialism.

The concept of telepathy is not a common phenomenon and as such must be couched to reflect the sophistication of these folklorists and Pentecostal pastors who are laced with jargons that are not very meaningful to initiates and oppress their victims. They usually succeeded in influencing the people they are morally right and with the dictate of pure reason in giving positive result from telepathying.

Perhaps, there are other forms of witchcraft which has nothing to do with African Philosophy. Things like:

Tarot Card Reading

This is practice of using certain groups of cards called tarot cards to gain insight into the past, present or future by formulating the cards. Its predictions are illusion and works according to demons attached to it.

Psychokinesis

This is the supposed ability to move objects by mental effort alone.

ESP (Extra Sensory Perception)

This is the ability to gain information without the recognized physical senses. It is to sense objectively only through the mind without the body.

Pyrokinesis
This is the ability to set object or people on fire through the concentration of psychic powers.

Thus, is in this light that witchcraft has a scale of differences and they occur in different culture (s).

Between Folklores and Pentecostalism: A Redefinition of Witchcraft in Africa
Ongoing through the skeptical arguments of skeptics, one may, on the spur of the moment declare that the concept of witchcraft is a hoax and not generally accepted term of reference in African culture but in the actual sense of the matter; it has been inculcated into the life of the people as the basic element of misfortune. To a considerable extent, such effect did occur to the fact that the folklorist and the Pentecostal pastors have strong attachment to the narratives of witchcraft in Africa. They relatively confine in the belief that it exists and have some elements of power over it. They literally involve themselves in dispensation of justice on the menace of occurrence of witchcraft in the society.

Notably widening in this context is the notion of the leadership capital by the folklorists and the Pentecostal pastors who accused the innocent people that they are witches and as such must be punished. They claim also to have power for exorcism. So under this dispensation, there is obvious lack of human rights, no inalienable rights to life and autonomy of individual space. People are falsely accused, intimidated and widely dominated with claim that they are possessed with witchcraft. In fact, they promote miracles in their churches as a popular commodity that will increase their finances. They diagnose children and accused them of being responsible for their parents' misfortunes or calamity.

Similarly, Okuyade (2011:7) argues that "pastoral status both in the filmic space and time and the social and real space becomes a filmic cum theological strategy of emphasizing that the evangelical films are not just entertainment but a medium for selling God".

Witchcraft, the occult, and neo Pentecostal rhetoric have been dominant theme in several African films of Nollywood as an expression of dissatisfactory relationship in the society between the accusers of witchraft and they accused victim of witchcraft. In fact, such sociopolitical exigencies have polluted film industry in Nigeria. As Haynes (2007:2) observes:

> Video boom was met with great hostility from the cultural establishment, which was appealed and embarrassed both by the low technical quality of films and by the mentality they displayed, dominated by witchcraft and other forms of magic and by the imitation of the low, foreign, melodramatic form of the television serial. Thus in principle, we share the view that "the practice of witchcraft, sorcery or the occult is a thriving business people live within the town by setting up of film industry (Dipio, 2007:78).

Dipio particularly extend this to big financial boom in the Pentecostal churches in which the hybridization of folk belief and neo Pentecostal dogma have played a part in increasing the redefinition of witchcraft in Africa. They changed the phenomenon into acceptable definition in which it is given a status of recognition in African ontology.

The ontological issue in this work is about the folk beliefs and the exigencies of the Pentecostal pastors which has to do with reality of the spiritual manifestation of witchcraft in Africa, and how they utilized the concept for their personal interests. They exhibit some tendencies that allow it to be in their respective institutions, and thereby culminated in branding some people witches. Hence, it is on this light that Awolalu expresses it as thus: "in traditional African societies and beyond, witchcraft is a reality, not superstitions" (Awolalu, 1979:25). In other words, "to the African of every category, witchcraft is an urgent reality"(Ajayi, 1981:102). Perhaps, this is not to be over emphasized as it is part and parcel of history. "Witchcraft is the most visible and dramatic aspect of the rational logic of being, what might be termed a relational ontology" (Wesch, 2008:1).

In our experience, there never was in fact, a fixed canon that there is an empirical verification on the concept of witchcraft in Africa. It is more or less under the realm of assumption that someone is a witch and he/she is causing misfortune to the people. Such judgement is always subject of revision and falsifications and in fact, they were constantly being revised because of lack of evidence on the side of the accusers. So, the religious Pentecostal churches are always on the ground of process theology, affirming much belief in the concept of witchcraft. They do this through the invocation of prayers and accuse some people as possessing the power of witchcraft. More to this is that there is no acceptable epistemology on the conditionalities of the existence of the African witchcraft. And as such, the African audience to these churches and Nollywood films are buying these axioms of folklores in the belief of witchcraft because they have been manipulated and influenced in such cultural matrix of hegemonic homonometivity of culture. Thus, it is in the light of this consideration that an epistemological question may inquire to know about the possibility of the existence of this concept. How does it come about spiritually by the people. According to Awolalu (1979:86):

> Witchcraft is acquired in different ways. Some people are born witches others inherit witchcraft from their mothers that is by heredity. It is said that some people pay for and procure it and others have witchcraft "stuff" passed to them in food given by women who are witches.

For the Ibibio people in Nigeria, men are usually witches but women believed to be more dangerous and these are basically on assumption because, no person has verified it to be true. According to Quarcoopome, "the witch doctor… engaged in witch-hunting. He may detect a witch by going into a trance, by using medicine or gazing into water or consulting the dead" (Quarcoopome, 1987:154). More so, on the other hands, most of the evangelist pastors are diviners, they claimed to possess powers in diagnosing children with witchcraft. They claim to have their powers from the above to prophesize things. As Oppenheimer (2010:7) observes, "belief in possession of witchcraft is especially common among Pentecostals in Nigeria, where it reinforces native traditions that spirits are real and intervene in human affairs". Akrong (2000:1) maintained that the importance attached to witchcraft in the neo Pentecostal and charismatic churches are increasing "creating what can be discredited as a revived witchcraft mentality in popular Christianity".

The aim here has not been to imply that they have existence of witchcraft in African, but simply to portray that there is a revival culture or to be more direct a redefinition of witchcraft mentality in African by the folklorists and Pentecostal pastors who cherished in such business.

Nonetheless, their common allegiance to the issue of witchcraft is tentatively for the growth of economic capital flight in their churches and institutions for money.

Religion in the other hand is purely for spiritual consecration that doesn't require victimization of individuals on the ground of witchcraft. Religion promotes social and economic wellbeing. It helps in building positive peace in the society through collaboration, inclusiveness, reciprocity and collectivity among people.

So concerning causality on the side of the epistemology of witchcraft in Africa, what can we say to amount to the real vision of reality on witchcraft. And more so, passing from the idea of the folklorist and the Pentecostal pastors to considering only theirs on the avowed interpretations of witchcraft. The question that accrued on this inquiry is this, how do we come to term of reference on the actual state of epistemology that there is an invocation of witchcraft?

How do we reflect the ferment of human rights judging from the misinterpretations of witchcraft, proper hermeneutics understanding of the concept? This brings us to lay aside some misconceptions about the human rights corpus and movement that does not tally with the universal norms. So it is in this case that we refer it as a cultural rights and not human rights. Human rights are visions of universality of social phenomena, that can be recognized by all and sundry. So, the axiological question may take offence on folklorist and the Pentecostal pastors in punishing the offenders of witchcraft. It is basically wrong to punish the people on the ground of witchcraft, because no one can be truly objective about the existence of witchcraft.

In that sense, true objectivity is a subjective fiction of the cultural legacy of the folklorists and Pentecostal pastors who purely based on this fallacy of ignorance that no one has ever proven them wrong that there is no concept of witchcraft. In this case, it signifies that it exists because no one has proven it otherwise, that it does not exist.

Perhaps Karl Marx sees this as state of false consciousness. So, the question of cultural and religious hegemonies are forms of consciousness in which they people are compelled to live as their ways of life, and this is how the folklorists and Pentecostal pastors subjected the people to believe in witchcraft.

Gramsci noted that "hegemony was based on Marx's idea of false consciousness, a state in which individuals become unaware of the domination in their lives" (Gramsci, 1957:395).

Presumably, people are very pervasive and unconscious when it comes to the domain of religion with the issues of spirituality, intentionality, intent subconsciousness, and so in that case, they accepted everything relating to that fact to be true. In hypnotism, there is nothing much about negation, everything is undertaken to the positive dimension to be true of the case. It is a total submission of the will.

This critical view has special implications for Africa, because it questions both the fit of liberalism and human rights in Africa. If we agree that all social truths are initially local, what does that say about the so-called natural attributes of human beings on the assumption of

witchcraft by the folkore and Pentecostal dogma. If social truth is contextual, cultural, historical, and time bound, how can one find the relevance of the human rights project in Africa? This is not to say that local truth cannot be transformed into universal truths. They can but the question is how one gets the objective truth about witchcraft. How can this claim turn into universal human right claim, when in the real situation, that it is punishing the innocent children and adult whom they subjected to possess the power of witchcraft, and are dangerous to the society. These are the reasons why they are not in the object of human rights watch, but in the abuse of human rights.

Conclusion

As we observed literarily in this work, by judging from the analysis given so far about the environment of witchcraft in Africa, one will gladly conclude that the epistemological references on the nature of witchcraft is begging for redefinition, judging from the fact that it has been hijacked by the folklorists and Pentecostal pastors. We have also looked into the scope and subjectivity of witchcraft and justified the conceptual rarefaction of the discipline. More so, we extol the virtue of true humanism to castigate the epistemological impact of the folklores and Pentecostal dogma. Thus, it is under this light that we gave the right hermeneutics understanding of the concept and extrapolated it with the concept of human rights corpus in Africa.

There must be a status of limitation in which one can assume potency of rights over others in justifying on the reality of witchcraft. so, any conceptual clarification imposed by the folklorists and Pentecostal pastors should be declared anathema and illogical to the genuine African epistemology.

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