



Secret Cult Menace in Nigeria within the Context of Social Structure and Political Economy: A Critical Analysis

Nnam, M Uchenna¹

Ebonyi State University, Nigeria

Abstract

The evil effects of secret cults have permeated the entire structure of the Nigerian society. This article, therefore, is designed to critically analyse secret cult menace in Nigeria by linking the core of the problem to our religious beliefs and oppressive colonial and post-colonial social structure/political economy. This article presents that some cult members and their apologists have advanced sophistries to convince the government and the public that their association is not a secret cult; hence we hear such sobriquets as fraternity, confraternity, system, 'runs', game, etc. The article established that cultism has both negative and positive consequences, but the former weighs heavier than the latter when objectively compared and contrasted. The article recommends that the government, alongside relevant authorities and civil society groups, should organise correction-oriented sessions for students in various institutions of learning in Nigeria with a view to exposing the dangers of secret cult membership as a potent way of dissuading potential members from joining the confraternities that exist within and outside the school system. The article also recommends the establishment of a proactive Anti-Cult outfit comprising credible students and untainted school security personnel that will liaise with the host community vigilance groups and conventional Police Force to forestall cult menace.

Keywords: Critical Analysis, Menace, Political Economy, Secret Cult, Social Structure.

Introduction

Secret cult is a socially constructed phenomenon; its definition is relative to time and place, and it depends on who is defining or stating the problem. This is where the crux of the matter lies and where experts have differing views on the subject matter. Onugha (1996), in Azoba (1999), defines cults as “groups or organisations characterised by the use of secret initiations or other rituals, oaths, grips (or hand-claps) or signs of recognition between members, stating that the existence, motives, membership, activities, plans and rituals of such societies are usually kept secret and not revealed to non-members”. To some observers, however, a distinction needs to be made between fraternity, confraternity and cult, given that these concepts (to them) are not the same. Fraternity is a “social organisation of male college students while confraternity is an association of persons

¹ Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria; Email: icharilife@yahoo.com

unified in a common purpose or profession, and cult is a system or community of religious worship or rituals generally considered to be extremist and bogus” (ThisDay, 11 October, 1997, P. 28 cited in Palu, 1999, p. 151).

A critical assessment of the preceding discordant opinions on secret cult reveals that the version of Palu/ThisDay Newspaper is a Pirate and Buccaneer Confraternal sophistry, or perhaps expression of subjective observers while that of Onugha/Azoba largely addressed the core of the problem that will fill a void in the existing knowledge. The fight against cultism will remain elusive or end in futility except a broader technique that explores the pros and cons of this malaise are employed. Traditionally, two major perspectives have emerged to account for the intricacies of secret cults in human society: theological and sociological/anthropological. Within the purview of theology, cult is an open or secret religious body or socio-religious movement with an extreme ideological dogma. This type of cult can be found among ‘houses or churches of idols’, viz: Traditional Worshippers, Christian denominations, Muslims, and the like. The recent orgy of violence and killing spree by the ‘Boko Haram’ (Western education is evil) Islamic cult, the Okija Shrine sacrificial victims, the burning alive and encouraging of church members to commit suicide by Pastor Kings who is now on death row, and many more cases of religious cult-motivated killings in Nigeria, are some notable examples of theological cult menace in Nigeria. The doctrines of most religious cults are wreathed in metaphysics, mysticism, telepathy, esoteric, magical powers of influence, exorcism, hypnosis, channelling and necromancy.

From the Anthropological/Sociological point of view, cult in keeping with the common parlance, is a gender-specific (men only, or women only) or gender-combination (unisex) association characterised by extremism, regimentation, secrecy, bizarre hazing rituals, argots, undue spirit of camaraderie at the expense of non-members, inclination to treat non-members and opposing cult members with deep contempt and terrible attacks, and subjection of members to a military-like drilling before, during and after initiation. Fraternity, game, confraternity, family, system, brotherhood, culture, society, runs (current names for secret cult) or runs-man, game-man, rugged-man, system-man (current name for secret cult members), or whichever name secret cults and cultists have recently assumed in Nigeria, cultism is still a criminal subculture which deviates from the core values that guide and guard mainstream society. Arguably, secret cult is a major contemporary social problem plaguing the Nigerian educational system, and has virtually permeated the entire structure of the society. In our different schools, homes, places of work and worship, and neighbourhoods, secret cults and cultists dominate. It is against this backdrop that the study sets out to engage in a critical analysis of secret cult menace within the context of social structure and political economy of Nigeria.

General Overview of the Concept of Secret Cult in Nigeria

Secret cult is not a recent phenomenon in the annals of African civilisation. As far as we can recollect, the social structure-cum-political economy of various ancient African societies was and still is predicated on secret societies as the pivot around which religion and social control revolve. For instance, the ancient Mende and Temne chiefdoms in the present-day Sierra Leone have revered secret cult called ‘Poro’ (strictly for men) and ‘Sande’ (only for women). A similar secret society exists among the Vai people of Liberia. In Liberia, the Mende-Temne ‘Poro’ cult is called ‘Beri’ and the ‘Sande’ is known as ‘Bundu’. History has it that Mende and Temne people have reverence for ‘Poro’, they

regard it as a spirit which often transforms into a 'man-like being' wearing a formidable mask. Non-initiates and women are expected to remain indoors when 'Poro' is displaying while the initiates in nude chant strangely through the streets killing hapless passers-by who accidentally run into them.

Indeed, African anthropomorphism (core traditional African religion which centres on the beliefs that God can manifest in human and animal forms, gods and goddesses; and that totemic animals and objects possess the same feelings and qualities as human beings), which is premised on secret societies, was and remains commonplace in contemporary Nigeria. Although a remarkable number of these traditional secret societies are gradually losing their potency and efficacy owing to Western culture and civilisation (Christianity precisely), some of them still exist and are even regarded with awe and fear. Some of these confraternities in Nigeria are: the 'Ogboni' secret cult among the Yoruba, 'Ekpe' secret cult among the Efik, and 'Ogo' secret cult among the Afikpo-Igbo. These traditional secret societies influenced the social structure and political economy of Nigeria in one way or another and at one point in history. For instance, the first art of writing (named Nsibidi) in Nigeria was developed by the 'Ekpe' secret society, even though historically, Egypt was the first in the world to invent the art of writing (named hieroglyphics). The 'Ogo' secret cult is a veritable agent of socialisation, social control and catalyst for community development. Members of the 'Ogboni' secret cult had the wherewithal to run the Yoruba pre-colonial government; even colonial administrators consorted with them in a bid to perpetuate their Indirect Rule policies up to the early phase of Nigerian independence. Supporting this viewpoint, Awe (2003), Amaele (2008), and Amaele (2013) reiterate that the social exploits and political manipulations of 'Ogboni' confraternity in the old Oyo Empire are ever-green. Until recently, this secret society enthroned and dethroned traditional rulers and influenced political appointments and opportunities in Nigeria.

Against this background, therefore, I now narrow down this discussion to the emergence and proliferation of campus secret cults in Nigeria. Prior to the Nigerian independence on 1st October, 1960, Yaba Technology (YABATECH) and University College, Ibadan (UCI), was the only tertiary institutions in the country. Like other sectors of the Nigerian economy, the control of these schools was predominantly under White academics and administrators. A few courageous Nigerian students accused the management of these institutions of unnecessary bureaucracies and oppressive political regime. Admittedly, Nigerians suffered years of educational, political, racial and socio-cultural discrimination in the hands of the colonial masters. Embittered by this ugly development in their own country, a group of male students at the UCI who prided themselves as the 'Magnificent Seven', in 1952 formed the Pyrate Confraternity (PC) with a view to combating all forms of social injustice and to render humanitarian services. These seven are the then 18 year old Wole Soyinka (the spearhead), Raph Opara, Olumuyiwa Awe (who later renounced his membership), Aig-Imoukuede, Pius Olegbe, Tanyi Tubi and Nat Oyelola.

The Pyrate Ship, MV (Motor Vessel) Jolly Rogers, was torpedoed and capsized on the turbulent waters and violent tidal wave that struck the Mother Deck (University of Ibadan) in 1972. In other words, some members of Pyrate Confraternity broke away to form a parallel association known as Buccaneer Confraternity (BC). But not all the 'apostates' joined the new confraternity; most of them remained 'Juumen/Jewmen' (a current name for non-cult members in Nigeria) till date. The cause of this schism is still a

contentious issue, as each of the opposing cult groups and its apologists have advanced divergent views in justification of their action and reaction. For instance, the Pyrate Confraternity accused some of its members who later formed the Buccaneer Confraternity of gross misconduct and insubordination, thereby placing them on 'Black Spot' (indefinite suspension). This claim was however, debunked by the latter who rather accused the former of being opinionated, tribalistic, despotic, imperious, and indeed, of being used by the 'never-want-to-go' colonial masters and military juntas to further oppress and annihilate many defenceless Nigerian victims (women, children, the sick and disabled, and underage civilians) before, during and after the notorious civil war in the country. No matter whose version of the story is credible or how palatable and placating some of it may appear, the fact should not be vitiated that secret cult is a vicious circle which bodes ill for any society that wants to make progress! The Nigerian society generally, and our educational system in particular, have witnessed violence and disruption of an unprecedented magnitude stemming from incessant secret cult menace.

Since that rupture, the two confraternities have not witnessed further divisions. Rather, intending members who could not meet the rigorous processes and high qualifications required for entry into Pyrate and Buccaneer confraternities then resorted to forming new ones with different visions and missions. Hence, the proliferation of campus secret cults in Nigeria such as Black Axe, Mafia, Vikings, Ku Klux Klan (KKK), Eiyé, Black Beret (2.2), Mgba-Mgba Brothers, Trojan Horse, Jurists, Maphite, Black Cats, Temple of Eden, Burkinafaso (BF), etc. The female ones include, Amazons (A-Z), Royal Queens (RQ), Daughters of Jezebel (DJ), Queen of the Coast (QC), Black Brassier (BB), and the like. This study dovetails with the views of Amaele (2013) which states ironically that all the secret cults in Nigeria now fight against justice and institute corruption and oppression. The trend has changed from the purity of their objectives when they were first founded: from donating blood to shedding and drinking blood, and from donations to the poor and needy to robbing them.

How Social Structure and Political Economy Generate and Sustain Secret Cult Menace in Nigeria?

Several studies, including the present research, suggest that there is no one form of crime that is best accounted for by a single theory or a specific model; a combination of theories seems best to support a sociological/criminological analysis of crime (Brown *et al.*). Integrated model approach to the study of crime and criminal behaviour is described as the pathway through which criminology is seeking to be both as simple and as general as possible (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2000). In order to examine the symbiotic relationship between social structure/political economy and secret cult menace in Nigeria, integration of political economy approach (social conflict theory) of Karl Marx and relative deprivation theory of Peter Blau and Judith Blau is applied.

The political economy perspective links crime and social deviance to socio-economic arrangements of a nation. The concept of social structure, according to Giddens (2006, p. 8), "refers to the fact that the social contexts of our lives do not consist just of random assortments of events or actions; they are structured, or patterned, in distinct ways. There are regularities in the ways we behave and in the relationships we have with one another". The political economy of Nigeria is structured on the dictates of capitalism. The system creates unhealthy competition, individualism, alienation, exploitation, oppression and two opposing class of people in the society: the 'haves' and the 'have nots' or the bourgeoisie

(ruling/upper class) and the proletariat (working/lower class). The downtrodden, instead of accepting a bleak future, use fair means or foul to improve their economic and political positions. The researcher thus alludes to Karl Marx's prediction that capitalism will sow the seeds of its own destruction. By this, Marx meant that capitalist economy will create the necessary conditions that will give rise to revolutions in society, and some of these conditions are: socio-economic and political inequalities, oppression, suppression, exploitation, dehumanisation, and deprivation of the lower/working class by the upper/ruling class.

On that score, it implies that certain economic factors and social forces induce human actions, inactions and reactions in non-conforming ways. The colonial hegemony introduced, among other things, corrupt social structure and spirit of capitalism (individualism and egocentricity) against the existing egalitarianism (collectivism and communalism) in Nigeria. The situation over the years has generated unhealthy and cut-throat competition, revolutions and counterrevolutions, and a plethora of heinous crimes in the country. The counterculture cult saga of 1952 which had held sway from the earliest laying of colonial history through to the present-day Nigeria is a testament to the ambivalent if not negative effects of colonialism. The confraternity tradition in Nigerian society is a manifestation of students' disenchantment with the oppression and social injustice meted out not only to them but also the populace. Cultism was therefore a medium through which students contributed to the fight against the widely condemned British colonialism in Nigeria.

The concept of relative deprivation was proposed by Judith Blau and Peter Blau, who combined concepts from anomie theory and social disorganisation models. According to the Blaus, lower class people may feel both deprived and embittered when they compare their life circumstances to those of the affluent. People who feel deprived because of their race or economic class eventually develop a sense of injustice and discontent. The less fortunate will begin to distrust the society that has nurtured social inequality and obstructed their chances of progressing by legitimate means (Blau & Blau, 1982; Siegel, 2008). However, the concept of relative deprivation cannot be discussed without reference to the social discontent theory earlier propounded by Robert Gurr. Social discontent theory treats relative deprivation, which Gurr (1970) defines in psychological parlance, as a 'perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and their value capabilities'. While value expectations refer to those goods and conditions which people believe they are rightfully entitled to, the value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of achieving if given the right opportunity or level playing field.

Accordingly, people choose to join secret cults as an expression of displeasure and dissatisfaction with the prevailing social order and political arrangements in their environment. That is, people resorted to the subculture of confraternity as a means of voicing discontent about the widespread miscarriage of justice in the legal system, oppressive political economy, and weak and corrupt social structure of Nigerian society. It is obvious that the lower class Nigerians, especially students were frustrated and their inalienable rights denied over time with impunity by the ruling class. At issue here is that when people are deprived of these 'goods' and 'conditions', as explained above, apathy, frustration, rancour and requite (revenge or reprisal) are likely to ensue and consequently find expression in illegitimate means such as cultism. This class of people suffer what Giddens calls the 'anomie of injustice', a situation in which realistic aspirations are faced

with inequitable opportunities and/or a distinction between high aspirations and limited opportunities. Since social origins usually facilitate or hamper access to the form of success represented by wealth or recognition or power, children from disadvantaged backgrounds tend more to join secret cults to obtain forcefully what they were denied at birth (Giddens, 1971, 1972, cited in Igodo, 2002).

The preceding argument, however, does not in any way suggest that the political class or the affluent and their relatives/children do not join secret cults; in fact, they do, even to a large extent. For instance, Palu (1999) is of the view that most cult members in Nigeria hailed from *well-to-do* families with high profile connections. Palu justified this claim when he said that Two (2) sons of a retired senior Air Force Officer were caught in the violent cult operations at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. This Officer did not only secure the release of his children, but also flew them abroad shortly afterwards for further studies. Again, some Vice Chancellors in Nigerian institutions of higher learning use their young cult members to douse the activities of vibrant Student Union Government (SUG) activities that challenged arbitrary rules and regulations in their various schools (Palu, 1999 citing *The Guardian*, 17 August, 1997, p. 17 & *New Nigerian*, 8 June, 1997, p. 17)

Furthermore, deprivation being witnessed today in the education sector is a sad reflection of corruption in the society and the low priority placed on standardisation and improvement of the intellectual custodians by those in government (Taiwo, 2004). This is in view of the fact that most members of these cult groups are from the upper echelon and are never serious with their academic pursuits. Seen from the political economy theory standpoint, I submit that any society where there is an unjustified lacuna between the poor and the rich as regards human and material resources is bound to witness all kinds of crimes like secret cults. From the social structure perspective specifically, certain conditions such as broken home, lack of parental care and supervision, and oppressive and hostile academic atmosphere can predispose many people to seek deviant routes of acclimatisation, which include joining confraternities. When a subculture say secret cult emerges (whether for good or bad) and is allowed to gain a foothold, its eradication becomes difficult; hence, the prevalence of subculture of secret cult membership in Nigeria.

That the school management and academic and non-academic staff preach against cultism does not vitiate the fact that most of them are cult members. They fraternise and harbour cultists who they use to suppress and repel students' protests, whether peaceful or not and justified or not. No wonder Azoba (1999) asserts that staff or members of school administration who are cultists often initiate students in order to use to fight fellow staff, and parents who are members of secret cults like 'Ogboni' often initiate their children, even when they are still in Primary school. Was it not reported that some Vice-Chancellors use cult members to douse the activities that may challenge arbitrary school rules and regulations, and that a Police chief accused the authorities of one of the State Universities in Nigeria of frustrating police efforts to arrest 177 students cult members whose cases were foolproof (New Nigerian, June 8, 1997, P. 17 cited in Azoba, 1999). Many parents, employers of labour, captains of industry, member of staff in institutions of learning, and political representatives (all are major stakeholders in fashioning the social structure and political economy) create and sustain cult menace in Nigeria. Using Afikpo as a unit of analysis, it is commonplace to see parents initiating their male children into the 'Ogo' confraternity, especially considering the fact that Afikpo culture forbids a man from

marrying unless he is initiated into this cult. Others use their social status and political positions in society to lure colleagues, students, friends, and relatives into their cults.

The Pros and Cons of Secret Cult Menace in Nigeria: A Sociological/Criminological Argument

To the uninitiated or non-radicals or untrained observers, the implications of cultism are always dysfunctional and disruptive. Nevertheless, sociological/criminological argument repudiates such popular but erroneous notion. The article will rather expand the frontiers of knowledge by exploring, if any, the positive effect(s) of this phenomenon. A core insight advanced by Functionalist and Marxian/Critical/Conflict/Radical Sociologists and Criminologists alike is that crimes (such as cultism) are not totally detestable and generally evil as many scholars tend to suggest. Citing Durkheim (1938), Haralambos and Holborn (2008) stress that a successful social structure defines the reasonable limits on desires, but when organisation falters, insatiable desires are unleashed. And unlimited aspirations create social pressure, which produce deviant solutions and coping mechanisms. Drawing on this argument, I reach the conclusion that any adverse effect of confraternity culture in Nigeria could be justified based on the postulation: 'you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs'. However, this article does not in any way encourage cultism nor attempt to put up a defence for its promotion.

Building on Durkheim's ideology that crime or deviance is not completely dysfunctional and destructive, Haralambos and Holborn (2008) acknowledge that crime is present in all types of society, and not every societal member will conform to the collective sentiments (shared norms, core values, and moral beliefs of the society). If the collective sentiments are too strong, there will be little deviance or crime, but paradoxically there will be minimal change, or progress. The collective sentiments therefore should only be moderate enough as not to crush originality: both the originality of the criminal (cult members), and the originality of the genius (non-cult members). Durkheim and his advocates, i.e. Haralambos and Holborn infer that crime is not only inevitable but also functional; it only becomes dysfunctional when its rate is unusually higher or low. No wonder the crime of cultism was not frowned upon at its inception; except by the colonial masters who felt that their authority was under threat.

The Federal Military Government of Nigeria and Northern rulers used some cult member to execute the 1966 pogrom and other pre and post Nigeria-Biafra war atrocities against the people of old Southeastern Nigeria (core Igbo and Delta-Igbo speaking people of Southern Nigeria). Issa (2012) substantiates this claim when he contends that by the mid-1980s some of the secret cultists had been co-opted by disgruntled elements in the intelligence and security services serving the military government and were used as foils to the left-wing student unions which, along with university teachers, were among the only remaining bastions of opposition to military rule. Chinua Achebe attests that Northern Nigerians in 1966 turned on Igbo civilians living in their region and unleashed wave of brutal massacres that Colin Legum of *The Observer* (United Kingdom) was the first to describe as a pogrom. Thirty Thousand civilian men, women, and children were slaughtered, hundreds of thousands were wounded, maimed, and violated, their homes and property looted and burnt—and no one asked any questions. A Sierra Leonean living in Northern Nigeria at the time wrote in horror and poignantly stated thus: "the killing of the Igbos (people of Southeastern Nigeria) has become a State industry in Nigeria" (Achebe, 2012. p. 83).

To verify the preceding sociological/criminological argument, Durkheim was confronted with this pertinent question: if crime is inevitable, what is the function of punishment? In response to this, Durkheim argued that the function of punishment was not to remove crime in society but to maintain the collective sentiments at their necessary level of strength. Punishment rather serves to heal the wounds done to the collective sentiments. Without punishment, the collective sentiments would lose their power to control behaviour, and the crime rate would reach the point where it becomes dysfunctional. Therefore, a healthy society requires both crime (cultism) and punishment; both are inevitable, and both are functional. In the final analysis, Durkheim explains that society itself generates deviance and crime for its own well-being (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008).

Although the high and unacceptable rate of secret cult menace in Nigeria is indicative of anomic condition, it helps to identify certain fundamental aspects of the social system that are dysfunctional or ineffectual for proper overhauling. Durkheim's thesis is relevant to this article because it reflects the sociological/criminological current that secret cult membership has, to an extent, its own advantages. It enables us to state the obvious, i.e. that the spate of secret confraternities in the country, beginning from the pre-independence through to the post-independence Nigeria is suggestive of corrupt, weak and oppressive social structure and political economy. For instance, Issa (2012) suggests that cultism in larger society has become a celebrated phenomenon among the political class who equally happen to be in control of the wealth of the nation. According to Amaele (2013), a number of institutional and/or environmental factors explain the rise in secret cult menace, and they are: general atmosphere of frustration, deprivation, hopelessness, hardship, and injustice brought upon the people by the socio-economic system. This has been further aggravated by years of military rule and civilian autocracy; the employment of cult members by some institutional administrators and politicians to fight their perceived enemies within and outside the school system; and the decay of national morality and social values.

Notwithstanding the purported positive effects of secret cult membership, this odious act has a multiplicity of deleterious effects not only on cultists but also non-cult members, academic community, Nigerian society and global community. The negative effects weigh heavier than the positive effects when objectively compared and contrasted, and the risk outweighs the advantages. The manifestations are destruction of lives and property, moral decadence and resurgence of anomie, poor academic performance and high rate of school dropouts, anti-development and enemy of progress, and exponential increase in crime wave (examination malpractice, robbery, kidnapping, drug abuse and alcoholism, rape, terrorism, political thuggery, etc). In addition generally, the activities of secret cult groups are morally reprehensible. Issa (2012) asserts that cultists have constituted themselves into gangs of 'never-do-well' set of people. Their mission is to loot, kill, steal and destroy lives and property at will. They have constituted themselves into a big cog in the wheel of Nigeria's educational development, and indeed, the growth and maturation of examination malpractice tendencies in our tertiary institutions have been considered as one of the direct fallout of cultism.

In the first two weeks of August 2004, 33 students of three Universities were brutally murdered in cultic attacks, suspected to have been perpetrated by cult members among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Of this figure, 15 were of the Ebonyi State University while the remaining 18 were of the Enugu State University of Science and

Technology and the University of Nigeria Nsukka (Edeki, 2004 cited in Issa, 2012). Cultism runs counter to the principles and practices of Nigerian education and its effects are felt at the individual, family, societal, school, national, and international levels. Again, cult activities yield no returns to the huge investment made by parents and society in the students. Instead, they lower productivity, slow down national development and breed a culture of violence, fear and insecurity (Amael, 2013). Certainly, cultism in Nigeria has done more harm than good to law abiding citizens, cult members themselves, and most importantly, all healthy institutions of the society. It is self-evident that secret cult members often intimidate lecturers into awarding them unmerited grades in examinations while their reckless and antisocial behaviour has on many occasions led to the closure of schools, thereby altering academic activities in a negative manner. The foregoing observations are just the tip of the iceberg; many more investigative reports on the negative impact of cultism remains abound.

Conclusion

The thrust of this article is to critically analyse the vexed issue of secret cult menace in Nigeria by linking the problem to our religious beliefs and oppressive colonial and post-colonial social structure/political economy. Shockingly, the study unravelled that secret cult menace has both negative and positive consequences, but established that the former prevails over the latter when objectively assessed. It established trajectories of symbiotic relationship among some 'significant others' (lecturers/teachers, high ranking security personnel, political leaders, parents, employers, the affluent, etc) who are themselves members of one confraternity or another and how they influence the social structure/political economy of Nigeria, beginning from the pre-colonial era through to the present-time.

The evil effects of secret cult menace have permeated the entire structure of the Nigerian society—nowhere is safe—virtually everyone is a potential victim of cultism. In various schools, homes, places of work and worship and neighbourhoods, secret cults and cultists prevail. Some cult groups and their apologists in the Nigeria have somewhat restructured their confraternities with their original names and insignia modified. This they do to convince the government and the public that their association is not a secret cult and as a result be registered or allowed to operation like any other ideal association in the mainstream society. No matter the title (official or unofficial) secret cults have assumed now or how mollifying the defence of their emergence and proliferation appears, the ideological dogma which is characterised by never-ending vendetta has not changed or ceased.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that secret cult menace is, to an extent, inevitable and functional. Little wonder therefore that membership of cult groups cut across diverse sectors of the Nigerian economy, and different classes of people are increasingly enlisting in them. It amounts to sheer romanticism and an unrealistic expectation to suggest a complete elimination of this social problem in the society. Nevertheless, the fact should not be vitiated that secret cult has done more harm than good to the Nigerian society. Even the cherished collective sentiments (norms, core values, law, etc) that guide and guard human conducts in society are at low ebb occasioned by secret cult menace. The article, therefore, recommends that the moribund secret cult law(s) should be strengthened and revived for effective prediction, prevention and control of this crime. It is not surprising therefore that Sociologists like Durkheim have concluded that when a crime

rate is high or unacceptable (as in the case of cultism in Nigeria), it becomes dysfunctional, and it is only punishment that can heal the wound done to the collective sentiments.

The government, alongside the school authorities and relevant civil society groups, should organise correction-oriented sessions for students in various institutions of learning in Nigeria, beginning from the Nursery schools through to the Tertiary. They should be exposed to the dangers of secret cult membership and insulate them from the preying eyes of cult members. If there is any programme that can reduce secret cult menace to the barest minimum, it is unconditional amnesty with effective aftercare and follow-up services for ex-cult members. Also, the study recommends the establishment of a proactive Anti-Cult outfit comprising credible students and untainted school security personnel that will liaise with the host community vigilance groups and conventional Police Force to forestall secret cult menace.

References

- Achebe, A. C. (2012). *There was a country: a personal history of Biafra*. USA: Penguin Group.
- Amale, S. (2008). *Cultism in tertiary institutions in Nigeria*. Ilorin: Indemac Print Media.
- Amale, S. (2013). Menace of cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions: challenges and way forward. *International Journal of Educational Foundation and Management*, 1(1), 32–41.
- Awe, M. (2003). Menace of campus cultism and its eradication. *Education Today*, 10(2), 22–29.
- Azoba, H. A. (1999). Cultism and the school factor: its implication for development of education in Nigeria. In S. I. Okoli & L. U. Ezeani (Eds.), *Education in Nigeria: a critical analysis* (pp. 162–169). Onitsh: Lincel Publishers.
- Beirne, P. & Messerschmitt J. (2000). *Criminology (3rd ed.)*. Boulder Colorado, London: Macmillan.
- Blau, J. & Blau, P. (1982). The cost of inequality: metropolitan structure and violent crime. *American Sociological Review*, 147, 114–129.
- Brown, S. E., Esbensen, F. & Geis, G. (1991). *Criminology: explaining crime and its context*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Anderson Publishing.
- Giddens, A. (2006). *Sociology (5th ed.)*. United Kingdom: Policy Press.
- Gurr, R. (1970). *Why men rebel?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Haralambos, M. & Holborn, M. (2008). *Sociology: themes and perspectives (7th ed.)*. London: HarperCollins.
- Igodo, C. (2002). *Campaign against cultism and drug abuse among youths in Nigeria*. Enugu: Magnet Business Enterprises.
- Issa, A. O. (2012). The impact of cultism and examination malpractices on the quality of education in the 21st century Nigeria. Retrieved on 15th August 2014 from <http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/publications/isaa/Dr.%20Isaa%2012doc>.
- Palu, P. Z. (1999). Towards a panacea for the cult menace in the Nigerian system of education. In S. I. Okoli & L. U. Ezeani (Eds.), *Education in Nigeria: a critical analysis* (pp. 150–161). Onitsha: Lincel Publishers.
- Siegel, L. J. (2008). *Criminology: the core (3rd ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Thomas Higher Education.
- Taiwo, A. (2004). Campus cult: a reflection of a corrupt society. Retrieved on 16th November 2014 from <http://www.dailytimesofNigeria.com>.