

ADVANCING THE MERCENARIES OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN THE FIGHT FOR GLOBAL PEACE AND SECURITY

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Abstract

Globally, the world is under attack. Call it al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), Boko Haram, or banditry. In fact, the list is endless. These organizations are increasingly assuming the position and posture of a hydra-headed monster. The military interventions of combined forces from America, Britain and indeed the United Nations joint forces have not succeeded in silencing these forces that tend to annihilate the entire humanity from the face of the earth. In Africa and particularly Nigeria, nobody can give the accurate figures of lives lost daily as a result of the activities of these terrorists, insurgents and bandits. Military weapons are daily acquired, personnel are daily trained, equipped and lined up to confront these forces, yet these anti-state forces do not feel perturbed, as they are increasingly posing and assuming greater dimensions against the people and states. It is to be noted that African Traditional Religion has mercenaries that can be deployed to assist in the curbing of the activities of these enemy powers. Such mercenaries as witchcraft, medicine, masquerades, secret cults and the like can provide the needed panacea for ensuring peace and security in the global world. The world recognizes and allows orthodox medicine to thrive

with traditional medicine in the provision and promotion of human health. Is acupuncture not a key component of traditional Chinese medicine? Do our laws and courts not recognize our customary arbitration, especially oath taking, as veritable means of conflict/dispute resolution? It then becomes pertinent that orthodox military weaponry can go hand in hand with African traditional forces and powers in our collective search for global peace and security. Indeed, the world stands to benefit from African Traditional Religion and its culture of peace.

Keywords: Advancing, mercenaries, fight, global, peace, security

Introduction

It will be proper to firstly offer some explanations concerning the purpose and usage of few terms which I deliberately decided to use in this work. The choice of the word “Advancing” has a dual meaning herein. The first connotes the upgrading, improving, making more efficient, uplifting, raising, elevation of the mercenaries of African Traditional Religion (ATR) so as to make them fit into the purpose for efficient use. The second meaning connotes pushing, moving forward, to advance towards, to proceed and to confront opposition of state powers with such mercenaries. Further, I carefully chose the word mercenaries here to represent the mystical powers abundant in African cosmology (world view) and traditional religion, with the exception of none, including the acclaimed “good” or “bad”, “black” or “white”; not just because they will be paid in the long run like human mercenaries but simply for the purpose of easy identification as indigenous to the traditional African society.

Overview of Security Challenges Globally

Globally, lives have been lost as a result of conflicts, wars and insecurity. In Darfur, over 300,000 people died (both military and

civilians) between 2003 and the present day. KIVU conflict claimed over 100,000 lives between 2004 – 2017. The war in North-West Pakistan, between 2004 – 2017, claimed between 45,000 – 79,000 lives. The Boko Haram insurgency claimed over 51,567 lives between 2009 and the present day (www.wikipedia.org). Africa is facing a lot of challenges. She is not alone in these challenges, as the challenges are of a global dimension. One of the challenges is the issue of security. It is doubtful if there is any African country that has not experienced one form of security challenge or the other. The al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), Boko Haram, bandits and, quite recently in Nigeria's South-East, **Unknown gunmen** at one time or the other have threatened, maimed and killed thousands and millions of people while propagating their reasons for taking up arms.

According to Akokpari (2007), human global insecurity has attained high levels in Africa, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Over 40 percent of its 800 million people live below the poverty line and this percentage is predicated to rise. Over 28 percent of all children in Sub-Saharan Africa are underweight as a result of malnutrition caused by war and other forms of human insecurity. Livingston (2017) argues that insecurity - across a range of measures, including human insecurity in conflict and food insecurity - is intensifying across SWATHS of Africa, including particularly in conflict zones such as Nigeria, Sudan and Somalia. On May 19 (Thursday), 2021, the Africa Security Initiative of the Centre for 21st Century Security and Intelligence at Brookings hosted a discussion on conflict, famine, and security issues in Africa today, which was moderated by Michael O'Hanlon Karen Attiah of the Washington Post who opened it with an overview of the situation in Nigeria, where an estimated five million people face acute food shortages and famine. This figure is to be further juxtaposed with the number of deaths recorded. It indeed calls for an increasingly dire concern. The food crisis is further

compounded by the presence of Boko Haram, a Nigeria-based militant Islamist group, banditry and operations of the “unknown gunmen”. The latest fragility in Chad which led to the April 20th death of the former President of Chad, Idriss Deby, and the subsequent military coup have profoundly destabilized the country and other parts of West Africa. African Security Initiative, on the 7th of May, 2021, held a discussion on fragility in Chad and counterterrorism strategies in West Africa, observing that over the past year (2020), the security situation has deteriorated significantly in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Northern Nigeria. It is to be observed that the West African sub-region, like some other parts of Africa, is facing several challenges from militancy and terrorism precipitated by diverse sets of local militants and international terrorist groups. Twardowski (2021), while summarizing the future of peacekeeping in Africa at an event held on Friday 29th February, 2021, posited that the U.N. Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) played a critical role in fostering conditions for sustainable peace, yet serious challenges abound and more lessons for the future exist. In all of these, human casualties abound on the side of the civilians and military alike. There have been peacekeeping missions in Namibia, El-Salvador, Cambodia, Guatemala, Timor Leste, Burundi, Sierra-Leone, Cote d’Ivoire and Liberia. Currently, there are 12 U.N peacekeeping missions. Four of the 5 most complex missions are in Africa (Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and South Sudan).

In Nigeria, for example, a report by the Institute for Security Studies has it that images like those of the latest killings in Borno State, where 35 people were killed, constituted the bigger security challenges. Obadiah (2019) notes that the actions of the security forces, amongst other factors, are militating against the search for peace and security in Nigeria. Collier (2009) writes that Africa is currently facing two entirely distinct security threats, one from the rise of radical Islam, the other from increased natural resource extraction. Collier observes that African security forces are ill-equipped to meet these threats. He

points out an urgent need for strengthened security in the Sahel and enhanced intelligence against terrorism, especially in East Africa. According to Collier, Africa is facing new security threats that are likely to be beyond its current or feasible domestic military capacity, requiring amongst other things international military assistance, at least to the neighbourhoods of Sahel and the Horn of Africa. In the long term, African governments will need to improve domestic military effectiveness. One sure way of having this is by advancing the mercenaries of African Traditional Religion (ATR) to fight alongside the conventional state security apparatus.

Piombo et al (2012) point out that in reducing insecurity in Africa, the roles and responsibilities of the U.S military, U.S government and non-governmental communities are essential. But the authors failed to recognize the importance of the mercenaries of ATR in augmenting or complementing those they identified. The aforementioned is a further proof that Africa ought to look inward in her search for peace. Wars killed 5 million African children within 20 years, says a study (www.dw.com_delivery). Children were deprived of clean water and basic healthcare in armed conflicts, leading to preventable deaths. Conflicts accounted for seven percent of all child deaths in Africa. According to FACTSHEET, conflict-related deaths in Sub-Saharan Africa (2015) in the first two months of 2015 saw about 8,300 people die as a result of conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa, with Nigeria, Cameroon, Sudan, Somalia and Niger accounting for roughly 90% of these deaths. The figures are extrapolated from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project which has tracked political violence in Africa since 1997 (www.africacheck.org). In the first two months of 2015, ten states accounted for 99% of conflict deaths in the region. Nigeria recorded 4,600 deaths; Cameroon, 950; Sudan, 700; Somalia, 630; Niger, 500; Democratic Republic of Congo, 253; South Sudan, 207; Burundi, 161 and Mali, 86 (Source: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project). Do all these not call for looking inwards by our political leaders?

Identifying Places where the Mercenaries of ATR can Function

As stated in the introduction, by mercenaries here the author is referring to the mystical powers in African Traditional Religion and cosmology. It has to do with things that are mystical and magical or mysterious, possibly having to do with the supernatural. It deals with what is beyond ordinary understanding (www.vocabulary.com). Mystical powers relate to or are characterized by mysticism, having a divine or sacred significance that surpasses natural human apprehension (www.e.dictionary.reverso.net). Gehman (2010) clearly states that mystical powers are powers beyond the ability of man to understand. They are not natural powers but powers from unseen and unexplained sources. These are powers of witchcraft, magic and sorcery. He states further that throughout Africa, people believe in a particular power that fills the earth. In fact, the universe itself has a power of force that affects people for good or for bad. Awolalu and Dapamie (1979) argue that magic and medicine in African Traditional Religion (ATR) are based on the belief that there are vital forces or supernatural powers in the universe that can be tapped and controlled by man. Magic, according to them, can be defined as an attempt by man to tap from and control these supernatural powers or resources of the universe for his own benefits. Medicine, on the other hand, is the art of using the available forces of nature to prevent diseases and to restore health. It is prophylactic and therapeutic (preventive and curative). Magic and medicine have many things therefore in common.

Mbiti (1969) appreciates that in African cosmology, there is mystical power which causes people to walk on fire, to lie on thorns or nails, to send curses or harm, including death, from a distance, to change into animals (lycanthropy), to spit on snakes and cause them to split open and die; power to stupefy thieves so that they can be caught red-

handed; power to make inanimate objects turn into biologically living creatures; there is power that enables experts to see into the secret, hidden information or the future, or to detect thieves and other culprits. African people know these and they seek to apply them in these and many other ways. Magic, opines Mbiti (1969), is generally considered under good magic and evil 'magic'. The good magic is used by specialists to heal diseases, and for the welfare of the communities through the counteracting misfortunes, and in warding off or diluting or destroying evil power. The diviner or medicine-man then provides amounts of mystical power to people in form of charms, amulets, powders, rags, feathers, figures, special incantations or cuttings on the body. He uses it to protect homesteads, families, fields, cattle and other property. It used to be a common practice in those days to go into African homesteads and observe, for example, a forked post standing in the middle of the compound, or a piece of pot on the roof of the house, or a few lines of ashes strewn across the gate as you enter the homestead.

Mbiti (1969) tells a story to buttress the fact that amongst Africans mystical powers, magic, witchcraft and sorcery exist. According to him, when he was a schoolboy, a locust invasion came to his home area, which ate up virtually every green, including crops, trees and grass, making everyone not only grieve but also to be horrified. Ironically, the locust never touched the field of his neighbour who had used anti-locust "medicines" to protect their farms and fields. Mbiti tells another story of Neal, JH and his encounter with a particular tree that refused to fall when construction was going on around where it stood after all efforts were made. Later, a traditional 'priest' (probably a diviner) was summoned, who made a particular sacrifice after which the "magic tree" was successfully uprooted. This happened in Tena near Accra in the present-day Ghana. Neal further tells how his enemies sent the forces of witchcraft to attack him, but since he was already protected by "medicine" from African experts, he was not harmed. Similar experiences abound in Mbiti's book as referenced.

Okeja (2011) observes and rightly too that much of what witchcraft represents in Africa has been susceptible to misunderstanding and confusion. This he sees as a small part of a tendency amongst Western scholars since the time of the now largely discredited Margaret Murray to approach the subject through a comparative lens vis-à-vis European witchcraft. Janzen and Wyatt (1987) inform us about the complimentary remarks about witchcraft by a native Congolese initiate, “from witchcraft... may be developed the remedy (Kimbuki) that will do most to raise-up our country. The ancestors were equipped with protective witchcraft of the clan (Kindoki Kiandunlila Kanda)... They could also gather the power of animals into their hand... whenever they needed... if we could make use of these kinds of witchcraft, our country would rapidly progress in knowledge of every kind. You witches (zinkoki) too, bring your science into the light to be written down so that the benefits in it... endow our race”.

Geschiere (1997) points out that in Eastern Cameroon, the term used for witchcraft among the Maka is *djambe*. It refers to a force inside a person. Its powers may make a proprietor more vulnerable. It encompasses the occult, the transformative killing and healing. Nunn et al (2017) confirm further and surely in the affirmative that in Democratic Republic of Congo, the belief in magical warfare technologies (such as bullet proofing) in the Eastern part of the country serves a group-level function as it increases group efficiency in warfare, even if it is sub-optional - at the individual level. According to these authors, in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, a region which has experienced persistent violence and large-scale conflict since the Rwandan Genocide of 1994, when Hutu militia fled Rwanda into the area. The area became the epicenter of the first Congo Civil War (1996-1997) and the second Congo Civil War (1998 – 2003). Since that time, conflict has persisted, with dozens of militant groups still operating in the region today. In the face of this insecurity, beliefs in spells that protect villagers and militants against death in combat have become widespread.

It was reported that in the village of Bulambika in the province of Sudkivu, where their women were occasionally raped and their houses set ablaze while their young men were gruesomely murdered. An elder of the village had a dream in which he was taught by the ancestors of his tribe to use supernatural powers to bullet proof the young men in the village and help them confront the source of the village insecurity. The protection would make those who had been bestowed protection immune to the bullets of the machine guns used by the enemy power. Any bullet fired at them would either miss or bounce off. The bullet proof was prepared and the power was tested on a goat, as the goat survived the gun attack. This proved to the villagers that the newly discovered “gri-gri” was effective. It was further reported that overtime, those with the bullet proof began to kill their enemies from whom they also obtained firearms and experienced peace thereafter.

The authors argue that this is one of the reasons why the belief in witchcraft persists. Okeja et al (2011) support this idea when they state that belief system in which such magical practices are deemed possible offers many benefits to Africans who hold them, as it provides an explanation that is constant with African cultural beliefs rather than appealing to Western scientific notions that are tainted by the history of colonialism (at least for many Africans). Waterman (2017) agrees that magic (including witchcraft) is first and foremost a technology, a primeval tool that humans stumbled upon eons ago for accessing an invisible realm that they sensed held the key to their well-being. It gave people an avenue to attain what their hearts desired - protection, divination, healing, luck, vengeance and, most of all, a sense of empowerment. It is a measure of comfort in a cold, dark world. According to Waterman, in Trobiand Islands, even till today, magic survives, and people still find the idea of it well, enchanting. Boske (2020) is of the opinion that no culture can claim a monopoly on witches. There is little doubt that in every inhabited continent of

the world, the majority of recorded human societies have believed in and feared the ability by some individuals to cause misfortune and injury to others by non-physical and uncanny (magical) means. The more frustrated people get, they do often turn to witchcraft, because they are like “well, the usual channels are just not working, so let’s see what else is out there”. Grossman told me (Bosker) “whenever there are events that really shake the foundations of society – the American Civil War, turmoil in prerevolutionary Russia, the Rise of Weimar Germany, England’s post war reconstruction – people absolutely turn towards the occult” (witchcraft). In the conception of Kohnart (1996), under particular circumstances, witchcraft becomes means of the poor in the struggle against oppression by establishing “cults of counter-violence”. Secret societies in traditional Africa have suffered an acceptable definition, primarily because, according to Onunwa (2005), the term ‘secret’ may require a “qualitative” and “comparative” explanation. However, Wedge Wood (1930) attempted a definition which fits into the author’s conception and work. She has described a secret society as “a voluntary association whose members, by virtue of their membership are possessed of some knowledge of which non-members are ignorant of. The nature of the knowledge will vary from one such association to another. It may comprise magical or religious ritual or spells, some sacred objects, the identity of the members, the ostensible functions of the society or indeed the very existence of family life”.

Awolalu and Dapamu (1979) posit that the groups are secret in the sense that membership is usually restricted, and they often engage in mysterious activities. Quarcoopome (1987) puts it succinctly when he opines that the existence of secret societies is an important feature of West African social life and by extension African Traditional Religion. A person could belong to more than one secret society at a time. Some of the notable secret societies in Africa include: the Poro society (also spelled, Purrah or Purroh), Ekpe, Sande, Ogoni, Odozi Obodo, Okonko and many others. Poro society, according to Awolalu

and Dapamu (1979), is one of the more documented secret societies in Africa. It is a men's secret society in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, said to have been introduced by the Mende people in 1000 AD. Although it has affront as a hunting society, many believe that the group yields significant influence in politics, especially in Liberia. According to the New York Times, Liberia's notorious war lord, Charles Taylor, is believed to have co-opted the Poro society which helped him project an aura of mystery and invincibility (www.face2faceafrica.com).

Butt-Thompson (1929) observes that West African secret societies fall into three groups: the mystic and religious, the democratic and patriotic and the subversive and criminal. The Leopard society, also known as Ekpe or Mgbe, was the oldest of Cross-River secret societies in West Africa. It was all-time male and most likely originating as a warrior society, formed to curb criminal activities within their communities. Sigfried (1994) writes that members of the Simo secret society in Ghana, Mali and Sierra Leone, described as a masked cult, belong to the group of cults whose priests possessed immense knowledge of herbs and roots in the practice of medicine to cure specific ailments. According to Waterfund (2006), the traditional African, through the practice of medicine, evokes spiritual protection by the use of talisman, charm, amulets and spiritual bath to make himself invincible. According to Olupom (2004), when sacrifices are offered, at the request of the spirits, gods and ancestors, their supernatural powers are energized to act on the initiates, believing that the spirits are strong enough to swap the lives of the initiates with those of the sacrificed animals. Ezekwesili et al (2019) lend credence to the fact that through liberation, invocation and supplication by medicine men in Africa, the mystical powers are awakened to fight to protect their own. Masquerades which are believed to have and manifest spiritual powers remain till today the symbolic resurrection of the ancestors with powers to prevent an enemy power from destroying members of their families.

Current Mystical Powers Protective Manifestation X-rayed

The recognition of the existence of mystical forces in the universe is an important aspect of the religious heritage of the Igbo and indeed the African people. Anyanwu (1999) does not agree more with this assertion when he opines that even all over the world, man has always believed in and viewed the universe and its contents as having some innate spiritual dynamism which has been given the term mystical power or force. Man has, therefore, from the past tried to harness and tap the mystical energy to his own advantage. Man's effort to utilize these forces led to acts which can summarily be called magic, sorcery or witchcraft. The belief in the ability of mystical powers to offer protection, especially in times of insecurity amongst Africans and indeed Nigerians, is manifest even today. This could easily be deciphered from numerous events and actions. In our Nollywood, actors and characters are seen fortifying themselves for one reason or another. It may be in the area of sorting for a bulletproof to resist gun fires, to appear impregnable to machete cuts, the possession the power to disappear, especially from seeming danger, and the ability or power to see tomorrow. In practical terms, stories are told and experiences shared of some protective powers manifesting in armed robbers who appear to be indestructible by the firing of the gun, and their ability to disappear when in danger of being arrested by law enforcement agencies or any other enemy attacks.

Olayemi (2019) reports of a Kenyan soldier who showed off his voodoo as he shot himself and still stood gallantly after the scary exercise. The African soldier with powerful black magic bulletproof charm posted a video showing that no gun on the planet, including an AK-47 Assault Rifle, could penetrate him. The author concludes that "we need this in the fight against insecurity". Vanguard on-line also reported about same soldier in its July 24th 2019 edition, pointing out that after the soldier shot himself, he spat out the bullet unharmed; although the last gun fired was followed with a little blood, he seemed fine. This type of protection is known as "Odeshi" in

Igboland, meaning “it does not leak or it would not leak”, which means if anyone shot them with a gun, it would not pierce their skin, hence their blood would not leak. The Bakasi Boys is a group of Nigerian youth vigilantes in the South-Eastern region of Nigeria, believed to be armed with an array of black magic artifacts and juju worn around their body. In parts of Anambra State today, they still enjoy popular support. Their greatest metaphysical power was their ability to be immune to gunshots (www.iol.co.za). Even when shot multiple times at close range, they would not flinch nor sustain any injuries.

Ojiroye (2018) writes that in May 2017, three months after a 34-years-old police corporal was posted to the Special Anti-Robbery Squad of the Ogun State Police Command, he came face to face with death. The corporal (name withheld) said it was a locate-and-arrest operation at a community in Ijebu Waterside area of the state. The SARS team had got a tip-off about the hideout of an armed robbery suspect. But within moments of locating a house in which the target was holed up, what was supposed to be a routine arrest quickly became a gun duel. The corporal told a Punch correspondent, “I was one of the first sets of people to get into the house and before we could sight him, we heard gunshots. We thought we were there to arrest one person. There were two other members of his gang with him and they just started shooting us. If I had not used my amulet that day, I would have died without doubt because I was not wearing a bulletproof vest. A couple of bullets hit me but did not enter my body. A member of our team, who was hit by a bullet in the leg, died that day”. Stories like this are common among operatives of Nigerian security agencies in a country where many policemen face armed robbers without protective gears. According to the corporal, the use of traditional protection is an open secret among security agents in the country, especially policemen. In the absence of the needed kits, like standard body armour, many policemen are toeing the traditional path of the warriors of old. The police corporal was reported to have confirmed: “I saw the bullet after

the exercise. Two of the suspects died in the shoot-out. The bullet left a mark in my right side where it hit me”. He explained that he got the amulet through a herbalist he was introduced to by a colleague, who was not a member of the squad. According to the police corporal, “I cannot reveal the things the charm was made of because they are also things that can be used to render it powerless”. The corporal was reported to have concluded: “the bullet proof vest we wear only covers the chest. God is the only protection that covers all parts of my body. This amulet is my protection kit and I consider it as a gift from God”. One other policeman also admitted that he was “protected” the traditional way, saying he felt more confident anytime he went on an operation with his charm under his bullet-proof vest. Even among local vigilance groups, especially the Oodua People Congress, it seems to be a thing of pride to be protected. The Head of Operations, Vigilante Group of Nigeria’s Lagos Mainland Local Government Branch, Mr. Ishola Agbodemu, believed that he might have lost his life without the protection of his gunshot-repelling charm. Agbodemu claimed he was shot in December, 2010 by the police, while working for a non-governmental organization fighting for the protection of slum dwellers.

According to Agbodemu, “It is only foolishness that would make people think these things no longer exist. Personally, I can attest to the fact that I have cheated death a few times because of it”. A member of the Oodua People’s Congress in Ado-Odo Ota area of Ogun State, Mr. Raheem Adetola, also shared his experience using a traditional bullet-proof. He said during one of their assignments, a group sprayed their vehicle with bullets from the rear. The bullets shattered the windshield. In the words of Odetola, “I led the team in the vehicle that day. I told all of them never to look back. If any of them had looked back, it would have been instant death. The shooting went on until we escaped. The protective charms we had at the time are still intact today”. Local security men make similar claims. The coordinator of a vigilance group, popularly called Onyabo, in Ikorodu North area of

Lagos State, Mr. Matthew Adesanya, was reported to have claimed that his men had survived gunshots on multiple occasions because he insisted that none of them must go on an operation or patrol without protection. He was quoted as saying: “People make the mistake of thinking that these things are ungodly. Without the power of God, it never works”. Saturday Punch of 17th January, 2018 reported that a prominent traditionalist and Ifa priest, Chief Ifeyemi Elebuibon, said that the use of traditional protection against gunshots and knife attacks are rife amongst Nigerians. According to him, on a regular basis, people consult him for such charms. He was quoted as saying: “Ayeta for gunshots and “Okigbe” for knife or machete attacks still exist”. Recently in the South-East of Nigeria, the unknown gunmen surfaced with an attendant increased security risk. Not a few believe that the unknown gunmen carry an extra power of bullet proof and disappearing ability. Eze (2021) reports how some unknown gunmen shot dead two soldiers on Monday night at a security checkpoint in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. A private security personal attached to a nearby filling station was also shot dead, while several persons sustained injuries. Security officials in Nigeria have been the target of such death attacks. In one of such attacks, four soldiers attached to an oil company (Starling Global Ltd) were gunned down at a hotel in a community in Rivers State, Nigeria. Soldiers were said to be among eight security officials killed by unknown gunmen along the Omagwa/Isiokpo/Elele Owerri Road in Rivers State. In Imo State Nigeria, gunmen attacked and set ablaze the country home of the state governor, Hope Uzodinma. It is a general belief among some Nigerians that these unknown gunmen are using some mystical powers in their operations. An eyewitness at the Ebonyi shot-out that killed two soldiers claimed it was the soldiers that first opened fire on the gunmen as the bullets refused to penetrate the bodies of the gunmen. The attackers retaliated, killing two soldiers and one civilian who used to collect money for the soldiers at the checkpoint. As other soldiers saw that bullets were not penetrating the bodies of the gunmen, they fled the scene.

The same was the story about the gunmen who attacked a police station at Ihitte/Uboma LGA of Imo State, Nigeria. Eye witnesses claimed that the gunmen who covered their faces started by firing themselves with their rifles. After sometime, they turned to the police station before which time all the police men on duty who saw the gunmen shooting themselves had fled the station. Oota, L (2021) reports how a chief priest aided Benue robbery kingpin, Gana, with charms to escape the arrest and bullets of security operatives. The chief priest, whose name was given as Mr. Ugbe Lorlunmun, owned a shrine from where he prepared charms and a boiling pot from which he was able to see the enemies of the late Gana and target them from his shrine. Mr. Lorlunmun, who spoke in Tiv language, said he used his shrine to shield Gana from arrest by security agents until he (Gana) voluntarily decided to come out from hiding. In a similar development, and as a direct fallout of the Gana debacle, the police were reported to have warned native doctors against providing criminals with charms. The Ebonyi State Command's Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Loveth Odah, in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria was quoted to have urged native doctors in the state and the country at large to steer clear of unlawful businesses (www.guardian.ng). Instead of using the traditional means to aid crime and criminality I am of the very strong opinion that these charms can be put into effective use in fighting on the side of our people and citizens against criminal elements in the society.

Recent Calls for the Use of Mercenaries of African Traditional Religion (ATR) in the Fight against Global Insecurity

The World Health Organization (WHO), on the 31st day of August, 2003, in Johannesburg South Africa, called on African governments to accord recognition to traditional medicine, create an enabling environment for its practice, and integrate the time-honoured system of medicine into their national health systems. This call was made by the WHO Regional Director of Africa, Dr. Ebrahim M. Samba, in a message on the occasion of the first African Traditional Medicine Day

to be observed region-wide. Dr. Saba noted that for centuries, traditional medicine played a crucial role in combating multiple and complex conditions affecting Africans and that because of its popularity, accessibility and affordability, more than 80% of the people in the region continued to rely on it for their needs. According to the Director, “it is (therefore) incumbent on governments in the Region to reverse the erosion of the centuries-old traditional medical knowledge and practiced. This way, they will be restoring the glory of traditional medicine to its pride of place, and perpetuating the culture of its utilization”. Flowing from such a call and bearing in mind that African traditional medicare is all-encompassing, including the use of mystic powers to protect, time is therefore ripe for Africans to advance the mercenaries of their traditional practice to enhance and fight for the security of their land (www.afro.who.int/news).

Alfred Anedo and Edith Ngozi (2019) identify some Igbo traditional security systems that can be used to check security lapses and or challenges in Nigeria. Such security provisions include:

- a. Mystical barricade which they called Ngige. It works in the sense that when a thief who knows about it sees it, the person shelves the idea of stealing from the area. However, if the thief does not know it or ignores it and goes ahead to steal, he or she experiences an ugly development, including unreading scratches, boils all over one's body, protrusion of the anus, blindness, elongation of the tongue or any other physical problem.
- b. Witchcraft charm (Ogwu Amosu)
- c. Palm tree charm (Ngwu Ogwu)
- d. Mystical flood (Iji Ogwu), a mystical fence around their towns, especially during the civil war (1966-70), with a powder-like charm, appearing before the eyes of the enemy as though the whole area was filled with water without any anchor for any ship nor was there any ship or canoe to cross over with. Enemies were scared of getting close to such mystical waters. It remained so till the end of the war and nothing happened to the citizenry.

- e. Bulletproof charms (Ogwu Mkpu)
- f. Awe instigating charm (Ogwu Ibobo)
- g. Vanishing charm (Ogwu Nele)

The authors were of the opinion that it was because of the neglect of the Igbo traditional security system by the government of the day which replaced them with ammunitions, CCTV and other modern equipments for fighting crime which do not solve any problems that there is high prevalence of crime. The authors conclude that Nigerian nation would be a better place to live in if the government will understand and adopt these Igbo security systems in collaboration with the modern system for effective checking of crimes. This paper has joined in this call. Tade (2019) writes that as a commercial nerve centre of Nigeria, violent crimes in Lagos, such as armed robbery, kidnapping rape and gang-related crimes, are common experience there. Owing to this, the Lagos State Government has invested significantly in modern policing capabilities, while also recognizing and regulating the traditional crime-fighting structures. Tade appreciates the fact that traditional structures of fighting crime remain largely unexplored, and identified four of such traditional crime and conflict-fighting structures to include, the traditional spiritualist (elegboogi) and babalawo (diviners) whose task is to protect people from being victims of crime and assist in demystifying puzzles surrounding theft; the family court (ile-ojo agbo-ile) whose task is to mitigate crises, especially petty theft; the king's court which is superior to the first two as they preside over cases of murder, etc; the traditional extrajudicial measure which involves the invoking of the spirits or community's deities with other ancestral deities which involves the preparation of charms; the satirical sanction or shaming. Tade, therefore, calls for the harnessing of these traditional methods to manage conflicts and crime, noting that these methods should be regulated by the police to prevent rights violations.

In a similar development, Alli et al (2021) write that aerial supply of arms, ammunition and food to bandits is a major reason for imposition

of “no fly zone” order on Zamfara State. The country is in a very precarious situation at this moment and every intelligence system that can help to pull it back from the brink will be followed through. It then became a thing to gladden hearts of Nigerians when it was later reported on www.free.onlin-training that a mystery helicopter supplying weapons and ammunitions to bandits and cattle rustlers has been arrested by locals using supernatural powers at Arina village in Shiroro Local Government Area, Niger State. This was done through the sending of bees to cover the body of the helicopter and chasing the pilots away. Such a report is also made by www.radiobiafreedom.wor and www.legit.ng. With the aforementioned great feats in areas of fighting against enemies of states, one will agree that the time is ripe to further mobilization of traditional powers to defend Nigeria, the continent of Africa, and the world at large.

Conclusion

In Africa and the world, security agencies seem to be losing ground, while the continent bleeds. There is concern by government officials, security experts and ordinary Africans that the ongoing attacks on security agencies in the South-East and South-South, which appeared to be coordinated, are getting worse by the day, and have already worsened the security challenges in the two regions, with Boko Haram insurgency raging in the North-East, and banditry, kidnapping, and the ongoing bloody conflict in different parts of the country. Is it not, therefore, time to engage the mercenaries of ATR to firstly fortify state security agencies, complement the fighting forces of the agencies with these mercenaries and further pass a law to incorporate the operations of these mercenaries into the Nigerian constitution? There is no gainsaying the fact that such mystical powers through witchcraft can be deployed to attack and demobilize our enemy's powers even at their point of settlement and take off. Through the ability of seeing into the future, such powers can easily detect evil plans of insurgents or bandits or unknown gunmen, while our security agencies are kept

on alert and deployed timely to destroy them wherever they are located. Security forces can be further protected by the use of charms as bulletproofs, with some selected medicine men fighting alongside our soldiers at the battle front.

Recommendations

The current near invincibility of non-state actors against the peace and stability of the worlds, Africa and Nigeria, calls for the fortification of states security architecture with mercenaries of ATR. The activities of the Boko Haram, bandits and unknown gunmen, which seem to be overwhelming our security agencies, should not be treated with further levity and kid gloves. Africa, through her mystical powers, can support our soldiers, police and other security outfits by calling out their mystical powers to duty in the following ways.

1. The government at different levels can engage our medicine men to come out with further and clearer practices that can enhance and fortify our security men in the line of duty.
2. Our medicine men with powers to fortify our men at the battle field should accompany them to such battles to play complementary roles.
3. Such practices should be made part of our laws and or constitution.
4. Our security operatives should firstly be fortified with such traditional powers as bullet proof or disappearing powers.
5. Such laws should have provision for punishment against anti-social or anti-state uses.
6. These attempts could further be emulated, domesticated by other nations into their fighting and security apparatus.

The writer has no doubt that mobilizing the mercenaries of ATR to fight alongside our security agencies against crime and criminality will in no small measure support the global search and fight for peace and security.

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