

EVILS OF SECRET CULTS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Cultism is one of the major social problems in Institutions of Higher Learning in Nigeria. This paper reviewed relevant literature in the areas of reasons why students involved themselves in cult activities in the higher institutions of learning, dangers and evils of cult activities in Nigerian University such as promoting acts of indiscipline and immorality among youths, causing premature death to many youthful lives, exposing the individual to HIV/AIDS through mutual sharing of same unsterilized piecing objects during initiation etc. Recommendations were made on the way forward on how to assist Nigerian youths to become free of cult and gang activities. The vital role of counselling services in assisting youths towards hard work and rejection of bad influences of peer pressure were highlighted

One of the greatest social crimes committed in the institutions of higher Learning in the country as of today is cultism. It is a social crime which is very rampant in Universities, Colleges of Agriculture, Colleges of Education, Mono and Polytechnics all over the country it is a social menace which is not restricted to only the institutions of higher learning but that which is a

common phenomenon that characterizes the entire society the secondary schools are not left behind. According to Ogunade 2002), cultic activities are sometimes laden with blood. It may be the blood of an animal or that of human beings. He claimed that during initiation rites or during rival group clashes within the University setting, blood Flow during which many lives were lost in the process. There are various secret cults

now in our institutions of higher learning. They are called different names depending on the institution. There are those cults mostly meant for male students while there are some mostly for the female students. These various cults are usually in conflicts with one another during which many of their lives including those of the innocent nonmembers are lost.

Definition of Terms

Cultism: Cult is a small group of people who have extreme religious beliefs and who are not part of any established religion. (Hornby, 2005)

Secret Cult: Ogunade (2002) defined a secret cult as an enclosed organized association or group devoted to the same cause. It is an enclosed group having an exclusive sacred ideology and a series of rites centering on their sacred Symbols.

Taiwo, (2004) listed the following as names of some secret cults that exist in Institutions of Higher Learning in Nigeria:

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| 1. Inboard | 14. Black scorpions |
| 2. Amazon | 15. Black sword |
| 3. Barracuda | 16. Blanchers |
| 4. Bas | 17. Big 20 |
| 5. Bess international | 18. Blood suckers |
| 6. Black axe: neo-black movement | 19. Brotherhood of blood |
| 7. Black beret fraternity | 20. Buccaneers (sea lords) |
| 8. Black brasserie | 21. Burkinafeso: revolution |
| 9. Black brothers | fraternity |
| 10. Black cat | 22. Banary |
| 11. Black cross | 23. Bappavandetto |
| 12. Black ladies club | 24. Daughters of jezebel |
| 13. Black Olals | 25. Dragons |
| | 26. Dreaded friends of friends |
| | 27. Egbe club |
| | 28. Eleye of air lords fraternity |
| | 29. Egbedudu |
| | 30. Axcutoriners |
| | 31. Fangs |
| | 32. Fliers |
| | 33. Frigate |
| | 34. Fentlemen club |
| | 35. Freen beret fraternity |
| | 36. Hard candles |
| | 37. Hepos |
| | 38. Hell's angel |
| | 39. Himalayas |
| | 40. Idalrus |
| | 41. Jaggare confederation |
| | 42. King cobra |
| | 43. Klamkonfraternityklansman |
| | 44. Kluklux(kkk)klan confraternity |
| | 45. Knite cadet |
| | 46. Mafia Lords |
| | 47. MalcomX |
| | 48. MahpitesOrMaphlate |
| | 49. Mgba-Mgba Brothers |
| | 50. Musketeers Fraternity |
| | 51. Neo-Black Movement |

52. National Association of Adventures
53. Nite Hawks
54. Nite Rovers
55. Osiri

must be familiar with and, if possible, possess a pistol or an axe. She must also be rich, bold and have very “big” men friends. To guarantee her acceptance, she must pass the torture test. Being a lesbian is an added advantage. She must also cultivate the habit of wearing jeans

Recruitment/Membership

A very important element in the mode of operation of secret cults is recruitment. Like any other social organization, recruitment must occur so that membership which might be lost through graduation, rustication, or even death, must be replenished. Recruitment exercise is closely tied to the willingness of students to become members of secret cults. Apart from some physical and emotional attributes which have been referred to earlier, prospective cult members must demonstrate the ability to use weapons, while ability to consume alcohol and use drugs are added advantages. New recruits must also demonstrate some stoic abilities, especially, ability to bear pain.

For the prospective female cultists, wearing of provocative dresses that accentuate natural curves and contours is almost a must (Brown 1999). They must also be able to display an unusual bravado during altercations with uninitiated female students. Some of the most popular female secret cults are, Black braziers, Amazons, Jezebels, White pants, just to name a few. A prospective female cultist, according to Okwe (2002) must be a smoker of all brands of cigarettes, she must be able to consume all kinds of alcohol, and she

Initiation

The initiation process commences immediately after new recruits have been thoroughly screened. The first step in the initiation process is swearing an oath of allegiance and secrecy. As Thomas (2002) observed, during an initiation ceremony, the eyes of the initiate are expected to be closed while some incantations are recited. New entrants are subjected to thorough beating as a means of toughening them and testing their endurance for pain. On the initiation day, the new entrants are made to drink some concoctions mixed with blood (Thomas 2002). Sometimes they are given some tough assignments like raping a very popular female student or a female member of the university staff.

For the female cultists, their initiation may include being forced to engage in some immoral activities. Brown (1999) observed that, among the Jezebels and Amazons for example, new entrants may be made to undergo six rounds of rigorous intercourse in quick successions. They may also be made to fight with other girls or strong boys. They may also be subjected to thorough flogging. New entrants are expected to

move around in groups of four or five as a means of protecting themselves against possible sexual harassment. During the initiation new members are taught to communicate with other members in coded language. Having been recruited and initiated, cult members are expected to engage in many activities, which form parts of the group norm.

Characteristics of the Secret Cult

The characteristics of secret cult according to Oyebanji(2002) include:

- a) Illegal possession of firearms;
- b) Drug abuse;
- c) Violent crimes like armed robbery;
- d) Illicit sexual escapades;
- e) Killing of innocent students, academic and non-academic staff;
- f) Extortion, threats, physical attacks, blackmail and other inhuman practices.

Evils of Secret Cult

There are many negative effects of secret cult. According to Omabu (2003) secret cult has adversely threatened the nation in the following ways:

1. Individual Development

- (i) It has brought premature death to many youthful lives.
- (ii) It affects the morale of the individual
- (iii) It promotes acts of indiscipline and immorality among youth.

(iv) It renders the individual unsociable, psychologically deranged, emotionally destabilized, mentally and spiritually confused.

(v) It exposes the individual to HIV/AIDS through mutual sharing of same unsterilized piercing object during initiation and the use of same unsterilized syringes and needles during drug abuse.

(vi) After initiation, they assume 'Super-human' form, and indulge in criminal activities e.g. armed robbery, assassins, kidnappings, rape, assault and battery, drug peddling, e.t.c that can take them to jail, if found guilty.

(vii) Most Cultist cum Gangsters are potential rapist, and research has revealed that most rapist hardly use Condom during sex orgy or rape.

(viii) The fortunate ones graduate to become half- baked graduate.

2. Educational Development

- (i) It erodes quality and standard education.
- (ii) It diminishes integrity and confidence in our educational system.

- (iii) It creates an entrenched disincentive to academic pursuit and planning excellence.
- (iv) It threatens the peaceful and progressive co-existence in our campuses and vicinities.

3. Societal and National Developments

- (i) It has being a threat to the internal security of the nation leading to loss of lives and properties.
- (ii) It has brought untold sorrow to many homes whose wards had being killed, maimed, raped, expelled or rusticated, victimized, e.t.c.
- (iii) It weakens the family ties and societal cum cultural values due its success in producing 'Monsters' for the nation which has made them to be nuisance to themselves, eyesore to their family, a bunch of nonentity to the society.
- (iv) It tarnishes the country's already battered image, creditability and national pride.
Also, a sentinel survey carried out on various campuses and vicinities showed that between 1995 and 2004, about 1,743 cultists have died; about 23 innocent students became victims of circumstances. While, about 6,733 cultists were

maimed and about 115 innocent students maimed.(Omabu, 2003)

Reasons for Joining Cultist Groups

Students are attracted to cultist groups for a variety of reasons. Generally the social atmosphere prevailing in the Nigerian universities provides an inspiring environment for secret cults to thrive. These may include lack of virile student unionism, erosion of the traditional academic culture, absence of intellectual debates and all other activities that are components of traditional campus culture.

Those who eventually enlist in secret cult groups might have been compelled to do so because of "sagging egos" that need to be boosted. Others join in order to have a sense of belonging and the need to be well "connected" (Eneji, 1996). Still others may join because of the need for financial assistance, to secure girl friends or for self protection (Ogunbameru 1997). Some students are also attracted to cultist groups because they are seeking after meaning, direction, comfort and love (Omotunde 1984). Secret cultism seems to have special attraction for youths who are emotionally disturbed and distressed. As Omotunde has further observed, recruitment into a secret cultist group is "dressed" up like a Japanese meal with "affection", "understanding" and "love" which easily attract the already vulnerable to the fold.

To the psychologically distressed, secret cults offer succor (Omotunde 1984). The succor is in form of love, affection and some degree of emotional security.

Students who are sought after by secret cults vary in social backgrounds. They might be children of professors, judges, politicians, senior police officers and so on. The status of their parents in society guarantees them some protection from the claws of law enforcement agents in the event that they get into trouble. Initiation naturally follows recruitment.

The Pyrates Confraternity at the University College, Ibadan, was formed by the first African Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka and a few others popularly known as **G7**. The original aims of the association were very lofty and noble. They aimed at producing future Nigerian leaders who would be very proud of their African heritage. Thus, the Pyrates Confraternity aimed at abolishing convention (Thomas 2002). It also wanted to revive the age of chivalry. As Thomas further asserts, the member of Confraternity boasted of the cleanest, the brightest appearance and the most politically conscious among the students.

Although the history of cultism on the university campuses in Nigeria dates back to some fifty years, its involvement in violence became manifest only some two decades ago.

Akinbami (1991) has observed, for example, that the Confraternity from which the present secret cults developed performed some significantly useful services on the university campuses during the 1960's and 1970's. For example, members of Confraternities formed the inner caucus that determined, who, among the students, occupied what positions in the student union government. It was not uncommon for Confraternity members to assiduously work for the removal of student union executives who performed below expectation.

On different campuses across the country, cults were in the forefront of promoting law and order. Akinbami (1991) has indeed observed that in the 1960's and 1970's, the University of Lagos employed the services of the Panama Confraternity to usher in distinguished visitors who came to the campus. For example, the Pan African Black axe confraternity normally commemorated the murder of anti-apartheid students who were murdered in Sharpeville, South Africa.

Unfortunately, however, from the beginning of the 1980's, the activities of Confraternities became virulently violent and secrecy became their ways of life. Their activities included "dealing" with any non-members who snatched a member's girl friend or "sugar daddy" (in case of female cultists). Their activities also included "settling" lecturers in cash or

kind (Okwe 2002). Female cultists began to operate prostitution rings and having their photographs displayed in popular hotels. From this period on, secret cults sprang up in the country like mushrooms with their activities assuming more devastating and dangerous proportions.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, the problem of cultism is a symptom of society which has undergone total moral decadence and where institutionalized and personal violence has become a way of life, where brute force has supplanted vigorous intellectual debate and with a conspicuous absence of dialogue as a veritable element of conflict resolution. Nigeria is a society where more money is yearly allocated to “defense”, to the detriment of social, welfare for citizens and education. To successfully combat the problem of secret cults, some changes must occur both in the general society and within educational institutions.

General education of the citizens on the corrosive effects of secret cultism must occur. Consequently, churches, mosques, school administrators and the society at large must fuse efforts to combat cultism. It is very necessary and urgent for the Committee of Vice Chancellors of the Nigerian universities to adopt a common and uniform approach to solving the problem of cultism. Sani, Orji, Egoro & Okoh (1994). This

approach will involve thoroughly investigating and finding root causes of the problem. It will also involve strengthening administrative powers to eliminate the scourge from the campus.

Recommendations

The writers wish to recommend the following that in many universities; those caught engaged in cult activities are either rusticated or expelled (Awe 2001). Some universities have undertaken the improvement of recreational activities. Umanah (2002) asserts that President Obasanjo gave money to various universities for the improvement of sporting activities and for repair of various infrastructures. In Lagos, the Commissioner of Police has suggested that those students who have been caught engaging in cult activities should be banned from being members of professional bodies.

In modern Nigeria the family influence has greatly receded, thus the average family has failed in its function to provide a solid moral foundation for children. Consequently, children are weakly prepared to resist negative peer group influences which they daily encounter in their interaction with others.

Parents/Guardians should create time and pay more attention to proper upbringing of their children wards. They should teach the children good values which are acceptable to the society. Students who are expelled from

universities, the school authorities should send the names and photographs of such students to all institutions in Nigeria; this will prevent them from being readmitted into any school. Relevant authorities in Nigerian education system should introduce effective counselling services into all educational systems in Nigeria in order to counsel students about dangers of engaging in cult activities.

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