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African indigenous religious rituals and magic in Ibadan politics: Issues for the democratisation process in Nigeria

Jegede, Charles Obafemi

Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

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The wind of democracy is blowing everywhere in Africa and particularly Nigeria. One remarkable aspect of this is that there exists a blend of indigenous religious rituals, magic and politics. These rituals in the ancient Yoruba kingdoms were used for checks and balances, deposing a bad ruler and protection of the citizenry. This is an important aspect of Nigerian democratization process that requires urgent attention. Ibadan as the largest city in West Africa and apart from Lagos the most populous city in the Southwest of Nigeria; and so in the trajectory of Nigerian democracy Ibadan is fundamental to the Nigerian political architecture. As in most other places in Nigeria, Ibadan politics, rituals and magic as practiced in African traditional religion have become veritable instruments in the hand of politicians as they play and practise politics. The researcher participated in political campaigns, observed meetings and the rituals of oath-taking and the way politicians came to priests and priestesses of Yoruba deities. The study reveals that in Ibadan politics, there is the mixture of indigenous religious rituals and magic in the political landscape in Nigeria.

Key words: Magic, rituals, religion, democracy, politics.

INTRODUCTION

The present nature of the Nigerian political terrain brings to the fore the interconnectedness between African traditional religion and politics especially the aspect of magic and rituals. Many politicians, cutting across categories of politicians seek protection and victory in elections from spiritual forces by using ritual, charms and various forms of cultic practices from Christianity, Islam, and indigenous African religion, the three major religions in Nigeria. Although in Nigeria, most citizens are either Christians or Muslims, but majority secretly or openly also practise African indigenous religion alongside their official religion. The reason, as generally expressed, given the political landscape and the risk involved in practising politics in Nigeria with the employment of African traditional religious ritual is inevitable. The reasons as

echoed in some quarters are that rituals in Christianity and Islam are not potent in African soil and most of the time the rituals and magic of these religions are inconsequential. Already, there exists a general advocacy that oath should be taken in the court of law by using cutlass, gun or other paraphernalia used for oath-taking in African indigenous religion instead of using Bible or Koran.

Nigeria has had a tortuous history of dancing around democracy. The history of governance in Nigeria has been the history of military coup and counter coup. Only recently, from May 1999, have Nigerians begun to experience what can be called a stable democracy.

As in most other religions, ritual and magic are essential practices in African indigenous religion. This

preliminary discussion argues first that the magical dimension of politics is not a marginal, but a central dimension of the nature of public authority, leadership, and popular identities in Nigerian democratic architecture. This paper is designed to stimulate research and foster a lively and straight forward debate on the issue of the use of occult power, charms and other material objects which are part of the practice inherent in African indigenous religion that are of direct implications for the democratisation process in Nigeria by investigating campaigns and election processes.

METHODOLOGY

In-depth key informant interviews and non-participatory observations of political activities since 2003 were used to elicit information. Politicians especially youths who are often used as political thugs, followers of political parties, contestants, as well as herbalists, priests and priestesses of *Orisa* (gods) among the Yoruba within and outside Ibadan and diviners of various categories were interviewed. The researcher also observed the practitioners as clients came for consultations from diviners, herbalists as well as priests and priestesses of divinities.

This study argues that the pervasiveness of magical and ritual practices in the Ibadan politics evidently proves that in most complicated issues and challenges of life people face, they quickly run to their tradition and origin. It also shows clearly that most Christians and Muslims have not been totally uprooted from their tradition. Although most Nigerians publicly and officially show themselves as Christians and Muslims, they are very much in tune with their origin and tradition at least for utilitarian purpose.

The author's observations and experiences during the 2003, 2007 and 2011 electioneering campaigns, noting especially the open display of charms and all kinds of magical outfit on campaign grounds, are relevant in this study.

It was observed that politicians used all forms of weapons to protect themselves against assassination and all that characterizes the present political terrain. Aside from the use of dangerous physical weapons, most participants were seen with all kinds of charms around their bodies. These instruments could be used openly and during any form of tussle or violence; they are practically applied to the bodies of the politicians involved.

Anthropologists who studied witchcraft during the pre-colonial era generally assumed that obsession with occult would disappear through urbanization. In the last two decades of the 20th century, major achievements of modernisation were lost. Life has become so miserably insecure that politicians must subject themselves to the patronage of priests, priestesses of divinities as well as

herbalists and sorcerers who are believed to be powerful individuals in the community.

Nigeria is a nation that has gone through a series of humiliating and unmitigated tragedies and these have been the hurdles Nigerians have to cross in their journeys to stable democracy. According to Harnisschfeger (2006), "Nigeria is a candidate for state collapse". In 1999, when Nigeria returned to democracy, people were more optimistic as expectations were high. But soon after the democratic election, there was an explosion of violence which was typified in the formation of ethnic militia. In the western part of Nigeria, there is O'odua People's Congress (OPC) and in the Southeast of Nigeria there is the Bakassi Boys. Militia in Nigeria typically makes use of magic or spiritual powers and many politicians and community hire them as security agents. In the South-eastern part of Nigeria particularly, they were given official recognition and started co-founding them. Their activities to a long extent helped to cleanse the land of hoodlums and robbers and as a result they were entrusted with the task of "cleansing" the land of criminals. While it is very clear that the rising concern about occult and magic powers has contributed to the decline of the state, it is not clear in what ways state decline may have contributed renewed concern or obsession with magic and occult.

In the nineteenth and part of the twentieth century, there were scholarly works on magic and religion. The fundamental issue has been the use of science as a knowledge system to explain the phenomenon of magic and religion. This trend has always led to a kind of epistemological chasm because magic is understood to involve the manipulation of mystical forces and beings, to achieve practical goals, and was intended to affect the natural world either positively or negatively. By implication therefore, magic is the act of influencing events objects, people and natural/physical phenomena by mystical or paranormal means. Frazier is of the opinion that there exists a relationship between magic and religion but that this relationship is structured according to a linear evolutionary framework and that an attempt to initiate a discussion on the magical must include the religious, and the scientific. He postulated that magical thought, the earliest stage of human development, was replaced by religious thought as people observed its failures and came to believe that they could propitiate gods in order to control nature. Religious thought was then replaced by scientific thought as human beings understood natural laws. From Frazier's stand point what is called magic can therefore be referred to as a science though in its crude form. It can be regarded as those scientific devices that were created within the religious and cultural milieu of a people to serve certain personal or collective advantage.

Thus in Weisman (1984: 266), Styer (2004: 67) said, by magic and occultism, is meant charms, amulets, rings,

belts, ritual, incantations used to attain personal desires. Magic can therefore be referred to as the potentiation of material objects prepared for politicians to prevent attacks and protection against the onslaught of the enemies (real and imaginary). By ritual, the author means oath taking, sacrament to influence the support of the people, so as to enter into the psyche of the electorate in order to win election into political offices and other personal advantages. In this case, animals could be offered to the gods following a form of liturgical practice.

Anthropological scholarship on ritual is particularly contentious as there is no definition that can be said to be the generally acceptable one.

Leach suggests, that the only thing "rituals" have in common is that they are actions that communicate meanings, or, in some cases create the very meanings they communicate - as can be seen in the naming of a new baby or rites of passage of a man or woman, initiation into the cults of the gods and initiation into adulthood. He suggests that we should look for similarities in such patterns of communication and meaning creation across cultures, and that any attempt to want to arrive at a universally acceptable definition is an exercise in futility.

Victor Turner is perhaps the most famous scholar who has written extensively on ritual especially in his work among the Ndembu of Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia). His work provided both a detailed account of an African ritual system and a major theoretical system for the analysis of ritual. According to Jegede (2010), ritual is the systematic device generated from the culture of a people through which what is hot is made cool so as to bring equilibrium to disequilibrium.

In Ibadan politics therefore are generated from the ritual as performed are not official ritual of the community rather, they are community ritual harnessed to by politicians to serve the purpose of collective or personal utilitarian advantages.

It was observed that there is a kind of manipulation to it. Ritual may be performed on specific occasions, or at the discretion of individuals who are key members or leaders of political party. It may be in arbitrary places, or in places especially reserved for it; either in public, in private, or before specific people. A ritual may be restricted to a certain subset of the members of the political party, and in fact, it can be between two people especially between a leader, political godfather or contestants.

The purposes and types of rituals vary and as well intertwine; at times, it may be to strengthen social and political bonds, to seek the supports of supernatural forces to win election and to demonstrate loyalty, respect and submission, stating one's affiliation, and unflinching support; sometimes, just for the pleasure of the ritual itself. Most of the time the ritual sessions involved oath-taking and making of covenant.

Pre-colonial Nigeria and the use of magic and ritual

Before the missionary enterprises of Christians and Muslims, ritual and magic in traditional religion and politics were inseparable. With colonialism, the political landscape changed. It swept under the carpet the indigenous religion of the people, the fabric with which the governance of the people was built. In contemporary Africa and particularly Nigeria, the religions that supposedly play prominent roles in Nigerian public space and particularly in politics are Islam and Christianity, even though traditional religion has a sizable number of adherents. It is also noteworthy that the African indigenous religion is not considered an issue when issues of politics and democracy are debated. This explains why the integration of indigenous religion into state polity for the realisation of the desired cultural renaissance and moral rejuvenation and stability is virtually impossible.

In the pre-colonial Africa and particularly Nigeria, from the appointment of a king to the proper governance, it was guided by one divinity or another. For example, a king should not be appointed unless it is approved by Ifa through divination which is administered in a specific way so as to determine the person that is divinely approved to govern the community. What gives approval and legitimacy to the person chosen is whether he is the person chosen by Ifa; a corpus system among the Yoruba.

Also in the removal of a king there were rituals that should be performed. For example in the old Oyo Empire, the Oyo Mesi alongside Ogboni could commission Bashorun to present an empty calabash or a dish containing parrot's eggs to the King. The Bashorun will then proclaim thus "the gods reject you, the people reject you, and the earth rejects you". Immediately this is proclaimed, the Oba opens the calabash, he is expected to die or commit suicide. It is also important that certain rituals are performed regularly for the benefit of the whole community. There was always an annual divination not just for the king (Ifa Oba) and the town (Ifa ilu). The king's divination is for long life and prosperity for the king and the town's divination is for the peace and stability of the community. There is therefore a communalistic dimension to the use of ritual in indigenous religion.

In contemporary Nigerian society, it has been very difficult for people to be completely removed from their tradition especially as exemplified in African indigenous religion. Many people still hold tenaciously to their origin. This vividly explains why there is a resurgence of the use of energies in indigenous religion in virtually every aspect of Nigerian peoples' lives including the political landscape.

Magic, in this paper, is the activation of supernatural and natural phenomena for personal and collective advantages. It is an appeal to primordial forces to achieve an end for self or a group of people. In this regard this kind of magic can be regarded as a kind of

science that explores both natural and supernatural realities to achieve an expected goal. Descriptively, it can be interpreted to mean meetings of political parties whereby the powers or energy in the indigenous belief systems are used for invocation, divination, covenant and other rituals to bind party members or factions together for winning an election and it can as well be used to cause trouble in the other party and among oppositions. People have often resorted to magic and ritual practice hinging on the loophole as exemplified in the absence of effective mechanism to resolve conflict. People have no option than to consult oracle and the rituals to solve quite a number of problems. There is obvious unpredictability in politics and governance. It is also worth noting and as expressed in many quarters, Nigerian democratization processes are not driven by ideology but by personal desire at the expense of collective will and purposes. This has led to quite a significant number of politicians into restlessness in the pursuits of political positions and powers.

Although this contention is not simply to argue using simple behaviorism, particularly it opines that the structure of the political architecture of Nigeria democracy principally necessitates the use of magic and occult powers. However, the correct standard, according to utilitarianism, is the principle of utility or as Bentham sometimes called it the "greatest happiness principle". That is the "greatest happiness for the greatest number of people". In other words, that which gives personal happiness at the expense of the happiness of the majority is wrong; it is egocentric (Lyons, 1999: 19). The crucial feature of utilitarian political morality is that it calls for a maximization of aggregate happiness. The research sees the interconnectedness of utilitarianism and democracy. Although no particular definition of magic has proved sufficiently applicable to all circumstances and context, the research is premised on a postulation that magic and occult practices that serve personal or collective advantage at the detriment of others can be regarded as the malevolent use of science and religion. Science and religion become evil when they are used at the expense of the majority. Definition of religion in this study is therefore modeled after the etymological definition which sees religion as being derived from *ligare* "bind, connect"; likely from a prefixed *re-ligare*, i.e. *re* (again) + *ligare* or "to reconnect." By implication what one does within a religious teaching that serves personal advantage at the expense of connectivity cannot be said to be religion but rather an aberration of religious practice. From Durkheim's perspective, magic is individualistic while religion is communalistic; religion emphasizes individuality at the expense of communality. In this study, this is magic, it is an occult practice. Magic typically aims and seeks to coerce or command spiritual forces and religion aims to supplicate their aid (Frazer, 1927). Magic manipulates and forces why religion supplicates

and persuades; it emphasizes the propitiation and "conciliation of higher powers." Related to this was the definition advanced by Malinowski as quoted by Styers (2004: 50). According to Malinowski, "magic practices always aimed to achieve specific and immediately tangible effect while religious rites were ends in themselves." According to Mauss (2004), magic for him was private, secret, mysterious, and above all prohibited while religion consisted of rites publicly acknowledged and approved. Magic is a creative connection and manipulation of the spheres of power. This cannot necessarily be regarded as an essential part of the stock of the ancient beliefs in indigenous religion but it entered into through human creation for human selfish ends. The use of magic and occult power is therefore antithetical to democratic ethics, which is grounded in societal values and tolerance. By implication, democracy thrives where reason is allowed to prevail. Democracy is dependent on the expansion of societal values and structure to facilitate the increased participation in the exercise of state power. Of course, the objective fact on the ground today in Nigeria shows a nation completely devastated by woes and misery.

In African indigenous religion, there are spiritual weapons and instrument of war and struggles that can be utilized for personal and collective advantage. For instance the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya, the use of the powers in African indigenous religion by both the Yoruba and Hausa during Hausa Sagamu war in July, 1999, the general use of these potent powers by the people during epidemic and drought, by the Ogboni, a legislative arm of the Yoruba governance, and several other uses of religious paraphernalia or powers and weapons are a vivid demonstration of how powers in indigenous religion could be invoked for collective advantage.

In this regard, magic and ritual in African indigenous religion are indispensable. However use of ritual and magic signals a complex problem in the democratic landscape. It is a necessary response to the nature of democracy in place. The research emphasized the relevance of critical thinking and the dangers of paranormal beliefs as this beclouds an intellectual analysis of politics and democracy. It allows for proper question and challenging of ideas, judgment of issues claim and propositions objectively, vigorously, thoroughly and carefully. This will dethrone dogmatic slumber and enthrone scientific temper, open-mindedness and scientific enquiry into this aspect of Nigerian democratic process. The Greek philosopher Socrates acknowledged the value of critical thinking when he said that "an unexamined life is not worth living". It reduces highly contested and vague issues of right and wrong to problems that can be addressed through public methods of observation and calculation rather than by appeals to equally vague and contested intuitive ideas. And because of this gain in analytical tractability, it may be able to secure greater

public agreement about what is at stake in a problematic political terrain.

Yet the use of magic and occult power in politics in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular is often times ignored by classical political and historical studies. The study of magic and medicine provides a new angle for studying the nature of modern ethnicity and social identities in contemporary Nigeria. Although we have wealth of studies on political nature of modern ethnicity, we lack any in-depth study of perception of ethnic identities. This is what Crais (2005) said should be taken with its deserved seriousness particularly the central role this plays. This he calls "politics of evil". Clifton's new book highlights how people in the Eastern Cape in South Africa creatively reworked symbols and ideas around witchcraft, rain making, and other supernatural forces to make intellectual and moral sense of a shifting terrain of power that produced rampant poverty, violence and the erosion of political legitimacy. It has also been reported that the proliferation of political strategies pertaining to the sphere of the Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon have been ubiquitous in public life since the democratization wave in the early 1990s. In the domestic arena, familial and social conflicts repeatedly crystallized around accusation of sorcery, especially during time of sudden death, personal disaster or political assassination. Hence the need to investigate this important but poorly understood dimension of politics in Africa in order to understand current crises of governance, nation-building, and ethnic hatred. The mystical aspect also bears considerable significance for revising current ideas about space, politics and territoriality in this region.

The Ibadan politics and Nigerian democracy

Politics in Ibadan cannot be divorced from the history and culture of Ibadan. Ibadan was founded in 1830 as a military camp during the Yoruba civil wars and developed into the most powerful Yoruba city state and the capital of Nigeria's former Western Region as well as the largest city in Nigeria and sub-saharan Africa. The pre-colonial history of Ibadan was centred on militarism and violence. Between 1951 and 1954 Ibadan was notably the centre of much that happened in the politics of the West and of Nigeria as a whole. Abati (2005) and Watson (2003) provide information and perspectives on Ibadan history and politics. In Ibadan, Watson writes: "Those who held chieftaincy posts were usually affluent, deriving income from war booty, tribute tolls, and sale of agricultural produce from farmers" (p: 47). The political history of Ibadan was characterised by intrigues and rivalries (*ibid*: 62). The problem with Ibadan politics is the problem with Nigerian democracy so much that in fact, in all the different ethnic groups in Nigeria, governance is still about political fascism and godfatherism (Albert, 2005) or

what has been referred to as *amala* politics (Ajayi, 2004). For example, in Ibadan there is always an emperor, a political bigwig who dictates the course of things. In the 1950s, Alhaji Adelabu Adegoke was fully in charge. He decided who should be what and how resources should be shared. To him any weapon could be used in political battles. He was a die-hard pragmatist.

Alhaji Busari Adelakun popularly known as *Eru o bodo* which literally means river is not afraid was the strong man of Ibadan politics in 1979-83 and it was reported that Adelakun used African magic and medicine, to their fullest although in the most diabolic, sadistic effects. Always around his chest and under his *agbada* was a tortoise. It was also said of him that when a gun was shot at him, the bullet could not enter his body, neither could he easily be arrested, and that he could disappear and appear at will.

The military ruled till 1999 and in May 1999, a new democracy was ushered in. In the new democracy, Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu emerged as the strong man of Ibadan politics, though he had been powerful before this era. Adedibu is popular for the *amala* and *gbegiri*, a palatable food among the Ibadan people, which according to the respondents of this study, serves a sacramental purpose among his followers. *Amala* is cooked with powdered yam, while *gbegiri*, the soup with which *amala* is eaten, is cooked with beans. The victory of Adedibu over Ladoja, the former governor of Oyo State, the support that Adedibu enjoys from the former President (Chief Olusegun Obasanjo), and the frequent visits of 2007 presidential, gubernatorial aspirants and other top politicians from most states in Nigeria to him, brought to the fore the special place that Ibadan occupies in the politics of Nigeria.

As said earlier, the contemporary politicking in Ibadan cannot be divorced from the history of Ibadan. The one disease of Ibadan politics is the disease of Nigerian democracy. The author's experience and observations on the above issues have shown that the eating of *amala* and *gbegiri* is a covenant which nurtures, sustains and maintains the magic of followership and the struggles for political power. It is a symbolic ritual representation of Adedibu's political ideology. Once you eat the *amala* and *gbegiri*, you are bound to shun the politics of ideas and follow what is generally referred to as the politics of *amala*. Every occasion of eating together among the Yoruba is a sacrament and a pledge of belonging. As a matter of cultural fact, the occasion is pan-African; at least in indigenous African society. By *amala* politics, it is not meant only the eating but also the communality and distribution of money to secure the peoples' faithfulness and followership. This is becoming infectious as the same scenario repeated itself in Anambra State (eastern Nigeria) where Chris Uba is the political godfather, and Kwara State (southwestern) where Olusola Saraki sits enthroned.

The June 12, 1993 saga particularly shook Nigerian nationhood to the fabric. The democratic project that resurfaced in May 1999 seemed so promising and it was pursued with so much vigour, but it is in fact in serious disarray, if not in ruins. In Nigeria, no effective protection can be expected from the police and judicial system. To say the least people are under siege; there is always almost a constant political intrigue that can either be inter-party, intra-party or both. The intrigues in many cases lead to exchange of bad words, open fight through the use of dangerous weapons, charms and occult powers and in many cases, political assassination. It has been argued in some quarters that the death of Bola Ige, a prominent politician and former Attorney General of the federation, is political. The removal of his cap in a public gathering has been explained as a ritual device through which his power could be emptied so as to make it easy to kill him. Another case in point was the hot debate on the removal of former speaker of the house of representative, Mrs Eteh, which led to the death of a member of the house. In her home town at Ikire, Osun State, it was reported that there were ritual killings to forestall the removal of Eteh as the speaker. According to Ukiwo (2003:118), it is estimated that at least 50, 000 people have been killed in several incidents of violence since the return to civilian rule. For instance the titanic war between Adedibu and Ladoja on one hand and Ladoja and Akala (Ladoja even when he was the governor of Oyo State no longer trusted in the security as provided by the State) on the other claimed many lives. The war became so intense that they all had to hire the use of powerful medicine men who did not only serve as their body guards but also as warlords.

The proliferation of political strategies pertaining to the sphere of the sacred in the Nigerian public space has been ubiquitous since the "democratization waves" of the early 1950s. The increasing competition for national power and visibility has become a do or die affairs. The menace is so daunting that decent and progressive people abhor politics and in fact, do not want to be identified with it. The fragmentation of national politics into warring factions built an atmosphere of tension and intense rivalry. These have intensified the impact of economic crisis and unabated and mounting tension, and the dramatic fragilization of all aspects of life that make for development. The use of magical and occult power is therefore inevitably associated with physical fragility, a crucial dimension of politics today. The increasing scarcity of financial resources which led to the collapse of industry and exacerbated by unemployment, the collapse of world-wide ideological and support networks and the decline of moral values have encouraged local struggles for power and the recourse to innovative tactics of power accumulation. These tactics include the manipulation of local, sacred emblems borrowed from the ancient cosmologies of power. In Africa and particularly in Nigeria,

there is the belief in a cosmology in which the material and the spiritual are closely interconnected, intertwined and can be manipulated; this is not religion; it can at best be described as sorcery. As a result, the material can be spiritually invoked to burn a house without kerosene or petrol, kill somebody without gun or any weapon, and make a person blind, lame or mad, poor or rich, bring rancour or make people fight, or cause war among party members, cause a motor accident or plane crash, make a thief to enter or not to enter into somebody's house, send epidemic into a community and many others. In other words, in African indigenous religion, anything is believed to be achievable with spiritual weapons. There is the strong belief that the material and the spiritual are not in separate domains.

Uses of occult powers

Apart from many other purposes, magic and occult power can be used for any of these purposes:

Okigbe: magical medicine against the pain and wounds from cut with the use of cutlass. Most politicians are always well prepared against any eventualities knowing full well that there could be fight, which might lead to the use of cutlass. It is a common view that when this medicine is used, the cutlass will not be able to penetrate into the body neither will there be pain.

Afeeri (magical medicine to disappear at will): this is a kind of magical medicine that is used in order that one can disappear and when the attackers are looking for him or her, they will not be able to find the person. This kind of magical medicine is no longer common, but a few people are still said to] have it. It is believed to be used infrequently except during intense crisis.

Aworo (magical power to draw many people into the campaign ground): This kind of medicine is rubbed on the body of the politician; it can as well be buried on the campaign ground. It is believed to serve personal advantage but it is also used to draw many people to support the candidature of a contestant. It is a common knowledge [view] that many religious people especially pastors or church founders use this medicine to draw crowd to their crusade.

Etutu (ritual and magic): Rituals are performed and magical medicine can be prepared from time to time especially to get the support of the witches. Among the Yoruba, witches are believed to be in control of the universe so much that they draw fortune and misfortune to people. This ritual or medicine is used to draw the support of the witches who in turn are believed to be able to draw to them the support of the people. Some of the

ritual can be referred to as *etutu eyonu awon agba* (ritual to get the support of the witches). This can serve as medicine to be eaten as food or drunk as a concoction; it can as well be used as charms to be attached to any parts of the body. It can as well be prepared ritually as offering to the witches and it is put in crossroads or in an open space.

Ajatuka (fight to finish): This is magical medicine that is believed to cause animosity and pandemonium among opposing political parties or faction. This is meant to confuse and make it impossible for members to agree among themselves neither will they thread the path of progress.

Aseta (bullet proof): This is a kind of medicine that is believed to be able to make it impossible for bullet to enter into the body. By its name, it is essentially meant to filter the bullet and filter it so that it will not penetrate into the body of the person at whom it was aimed. This can be distributed to members as a means of protection. As politicians prepare for political meetings and campaign, they also prepare for war. There is always tension and fear that there could be shoot out during political meetings and campaigns. Politicians are always prepared against eventualities.

Imule (Covenant): *Imule* is a special ritual whereby members of political parties or factions ritually bind themselves together especially during the primaries. It could be that everyone must support only one candidate and that to do otherwise is tantamount to betrayal and is believed to lead to calamity. It can be a form of eating together and invocation of forces through the use of incantation.

Political innovation, therefore, goes hand in hand with an increasing criminalization of politics, both real and metaphoric. In this context, political survival as well as political *protection* (clientelism) becomes literally a matter of life and death. Manipulating supernatural powers as a charismatic leader, or as a political militant and deriving magical protection from allegiance to a powerful patron, allow individuals, it is thought, to seek life options. These options, moreover, are part of longstanding ideas about power. In particular, ancient rituals of authority "charged" political godfathers and ritual specialists with a power of life and death over people. Political regulation, therefore, is strongly connected to keeping a balance between the benevolent and malevolent mystical capacities which are attributed to the leader.

Conclusion

In the context of contemporary Ibadan politics, leaders like Alhaji Lamidi Adedibnu were not just godfathers but also warlords, who derived legitimacy from their capacity to mobilize thugs, provide a sense of community to their faction, and produce significant political success as well as relative security and prosperity.

The impact of the belief in magic and ritual practices in the democratization process in Nigeria cannot be divorced from violent and autocratic nature of post-colonial governance in Nigeria. It mobilizes followers and provides ideological consensus. Where the postulated magical and occult 'resources' are shared for public and domestic purposes, political strategies and ideology are transposed into the postulated realm of the sacred. This results in mystification, political debate and simple scientific analysis of issues will be very difficult and it can in fact be impossible. Problems of politics and governance will therefore be bereft of scientific solutions.

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