

FACTORS IN SCHOOL CULTISM: THE ALARM AND THE SIREN

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ABSTRACT

This theoretical research is a survey of activities of school cults in Nigeria generally. In it, cult was defined and the secret beliefs of the groups usually kept secret and only made known to those initiated into the cults. A brief historical perspective was attempted. Reasons why the cults always go away with their crimes with no one able to deal with them were highlighted including their modus operandi. Cults in our schools were also ex-rayed to include their membership, initiation day and oath of allegiance. The paper tried to adduce some reasons for becoming cult members; their symbols, logo and signs. A list of some names and types of cults in our institutions of learning was compiled alongside some intervention strategies to combat the menace of cultism in our schools and nation at large.

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century contemporary Nigeria is beset with upsurge in criminal activities and other social vices which are giving sleepless nights to the government and other responsible members of the society. The mass media on daily basis, gives reports about the nefarious activities in the cities and villages where our youths engage in. Armed robbery is now a daily occurrence and reports by victims have persistently revealed that most of those actively involved in armed robbery are generally youths of under thirty-five years of age. Our youths have deviated from carrying pen and paper for more productive

activities, to carrying guns in order to steal, kill and destroy other members of the society and precious or valuable properties.

In the race for survival, some of the youths have resorted to prostitution. We are familiar with the cases of young Nigerian ladies who were in recent times deported from Italy and Ghana, even more expected from Republic of Mali for engaging in prostitution. Even our youths in secondary schools now opt for hotels during school hours as variously reported in papers. Students in tertiary institutions are often recruited to act as sex partners at wild parties thrown by irresponsible members of the society, and these ladies are usually adequately remunerated in cash and in kind.

It is a pity that the nation is not adequately catering for the needs of members of the populace, especially the rural poor, the urban migrants and our youths in general. Most of the social vices exhibited are probably due to the desire of youths to explore alternative avenues for survival in a society that does not cater for their needs, as well as venting their anger, frustrations and joblessness on a nation that has become irrelevant to their basic needs. It is a welcome development that the government has through various programmes of interventions promised to look into problems experienced by youths and to evolve a policy on youths that will assist in alleviating the problem of unemployment, non-fulfillment of dreams and frustrations and creating avenues for self-impression and self-actualization.

The incidence of drug abuse is becoming more prevalent in the society. More youths are involved in the use of drugs as well as dealing in drugs. Other Social vices that have become more prominent in the youths are assassinations, examination malpractices, bribery, corruption, arson, active participation in ethnic clashes. It is also alarming that youths are becoming more involved in ritual murders. It is reported recently of a youth graduate who lured his best friend into a trap that resulted in the unfortunate man being a victim of ritual murder, to the consternation of the mother of the victim who had always trusted her son's friend. In another incident as told by Rt. Rev. Monsignor Umoetuk, a young man lured the girl friend to an arranged swimming pool and attempted to push her into the swimming pool. The lady became apprehensively suspicious and smart, and rather pushed the young man into the pool. To her consternation, a crocodile instantly came up and tore the young man to pieces. When the lady escaped back into the room, bales of

currency notes were dropping into the room and she fled with just a wrapper to tell the story. Some of these vices have been traced to cultism in the institutions of learning in our land (a case in point is the recent past Port-Harcourt Mayhem cult war saga involving three cult gangs, headed by Ateke Tom, Soboma George and Igodo (Newswatch September, 2007) Sagar and others). The youths of Nigeria are future leaders of tomorrow and if alarm is not sounded about the menace of these anti-social activities, the future of the Nigerian Society is in a grave danger since cultism poses a great threat to the society and it is a fertile ground for the proliferation of all the other social vices mentioned earlier. It is very necessary for the youth to know about the evils of cultism so as to resist the vice and inhibit its propagation in our society. This is the focus of this intervention programme.

CULTISM IN THE SOCIETY DEFINED:

A cult is a secret society whose fellowship is usually kept secret and whose objectives are not made public. Members of cults are usually lured into the group without the realization of the negative consequences that will ensue. The secret beliefs of the groups are usually made known to only those initiated into the cult. The belief of a cult usually has a person or an idea as its main pilot. Members of a cult are forced under oath, obligation or threat to ensure that they promote the interest of fellow cult members, whether or not these interest are socially acceptable and legitimate. The members meet at unholy hours of the day in secret and during their meetings there are no minutes or proceedings which can easily give out the practices of the cults. Meetings involve rituals, chants and worship. The act of belonging to a secret cult and propagating their belief is known as cultism. A member of a cult is under satanic bondage and is constantly controlled by negative forces. He or she has no freedom of his own and is under oath to obey satanic directives and could even have negative impart on his close friends and relatives.

The modern day cult in Nigeria not only possess the characteristics of secrecy and ritualistic tendencies but have also become an avenue of acquiring powers by all means, terrorizing and subduing other members of the society. Some people become cult members due to their quest for the acquisition of wealth by all means and they do so through violence and coercion. Some of the cults engage in arm robbery to satisfy their quest for material advancement.

HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The history of secret cults dates back to the primitive age, with ancient Egypt and other parts of the world having various types of cults. In Nigeria, there were and still are prominent secret cults like the Ogboni fraternity of old Oyo and the Ekpe society of old Calabar. These older cults, unlike the contemporary ones, assisted in regulating behavior and enforcing compliance with traditional values. It must however be pointed out that some of these older ones were also used for evil and criminal purposes.

Historically, school cults emerged by the tail end of colonial rule. If we take time to trace the genealogy of these secret cults in our campuses then the reason for students joining them may no longer be surprising. Little then did one wonder when noted that secret cults in our schools are merely the extension arms of the parent body within the larger society.

The very first manifestation of confraternity tradition on Nigerian campuses occurred in 1952, when Prof Wole Soyinka, as a student, led seven other students and founded the school cult known as the Pyrate Confraternity at the University of Ibadan. It was according to Dr. Tunji Tobi, a Lagos based medical practitioner and a one time National Capon, as result of some social ills and conformist degradation exhibited not only by the students but by the society at large. He also noted that the organization at the time, had ideals that were humanistic. Thus, in some way, from the very beginning, the confraternity was non-conformist and had aspirations of creating some kind of change within its primary environment and the society at large (Newsatch March, 1994).

It is note worthy, therefore, to say that fraternities are usually voluntary, non profit organizations whose main objectives are promotion of friendship, loyalty, mutual support and brotherhood among members. Usually, the members are males. The Pyrates confraternity, according to Soyinka, was not involved in destructive and violent activities as the contemporary cult groups. At inception, the Pyrates confraternity aimed at promoting Excellency and enhancing right of its members and membership was only given to those who were performing well in academics. The proceedings of their meetings were

however not made known to the public. Over the years, due to personality clashes and leadership tussles, there had been splits; some members breaking away to form new cult groups.

Between 1952 and 2008, there had occurred abnormal genetic mutation which has now brought into existence a plethora of secret organizations, most of them with little or no similarities in ideas with the original concept developed by the big seven in 1952. According to sources the very first mutation occurred in the mid 70s when a number of the Pyrates now National Association of Seadogs, which was until then the only confraternity in existence, was 'black spotted' or expelled from the organization. The aggrieved party who was later to become the provost of the Lagos State College of Education (Newswatch, March 1994), decided to protest, to form a paralleled fraternity which he dubbed the 'Buccaneers', also known as National Association of Airlords. This instigated the adoption of the name National Association of Seadogs by the Pyrates. From its conception, the Buccaneers have been close to the Pyrates in terms of the original ideas except that it had to cope with serious credibility problems which gave rise to complex and a need for constant self assertion, which could be one of the causes of violence. With time others broke away from Buccaneers and form the 'Eiye' group which later gave birth to the Black Axe confraternity, up to the late, these cults held meetings during which they could not tolerate other students moving about on campuses during the period of their night meetings. Most non-members ensured that they kept away from these cults during their meetings.

The 1980's witnessed more vicious activities of these clubs with violence and anti-social behaviours dominating their programmes. Female students became more active in cult activities while other tertiary institutions like Polytechnics and Colleges of Education played more active roles. By the end of the twentieth century, secondary schools in Nigeria also became infected with cultism. As at now, it is not surprising that primary schools are also involved in secret cult activities. The alarming deviant behaviours and violent activities from these various cults has often led to the disruption of academic activities, maiming of people and loss of lives and property, resulting in the government placing a ban on cultism in schools. Despite this ban by government, the secret cults still carry on their nefarious activities. We remember what happened at University of Ife (OAU)

some years ago when cult members attacked members of the Student Union Executives leading to loss of liver of students. The dailies used to be replete with the activities of these cantankerous groups in almost all the federal and states tertiary institutions.

Cult members are mandated to recruit unwary members of the society into the various cult groups. The initiation ceremonies carried out by cults often involve secret rituals like swearing under oaths to some deity. Often the use of bizarre objects, animals and even human blood are engaged in order to subdue the initiates. The techniques used are often so frightening and horrific that if given options those being initiated would opt out of the ceremonies. Unfortunately, this is never possible. Those who have attempted to back out have often met their doom in the hands of these perpetrators of evil. Thanks be to God for those who have manifested courage in denouncing their membership of these atrocious groups and exposing their evil deeds.

When we consider the history of cults outside Nigeria, we find that campus secret cults, according to Babawale (1999), emerged from fraternities which made their first appearance in Europe during the middle age. These fraternities emerged out of the guild system and were established by craftsmen and merchants. From the time of medieval European universities until now the developed countries have witnessed a proliferation of fraternities in European and American Universities whose aim was to provide a conducive atmosphere for academic excellence. For example, in the United States, college fraternity started in 1776 with the establishment of Phi Beta Kappa at the College of Williams and Mary, Virginia, as a revolt by students against English discipline, and against the authority of the college in an attempt by the students to assert their right of assembly, free speech and independence. The women version known as sororities were established in 1867 and all these fraternities provided avenues of fun for the students. Some of the fraternities outside Nigeria have also grown into cults promoting wicked activities.

Further development and area of existence:

The story has not ended at just credibility problems, complex and self assertion as discipline and order had further break down especially with the multiplication of institutions of higher learning in the early 80s. This probably created some kind of vacuum in many of the institutions of higher learning such that secret cult or fraternities quickly

mushroomed, leading to the formation of black axe, Vikings, black berets and a host of others. Within the last two decades, female cult had reported to have come into existence, some of them being Daughters of Jezebel, the Amazons and the black brassieres.

The most disturbing aspect of this phenomenon is not in the mushrooming of the cult itself but in the catastrophe it visited on our educational settings where some of these cults had in the past let loose an orgy trying to occupy the supreme spot. Most of this violence encounters usually begun on very minor notes, and eventually escalate thus boomeranged into a full scale war where sophisticated weapons of destruction were used freely to kill and maim. In most instances, schools were abruptly closed down to send students, away from the institution be it tertiary or secondary schools, to avoid further carnage. The disruption of academic calendar was rampant occasioned by incessant closure of school. Students then only knew their year of matriculation while convocation was in the hands of fate. Students had their three or four years courses delayed to between five or six years respectively (the researcher being a victim) thus leading to the genesis of the half barked and pass your examination at all cost syndrome currently being grappled with.

These led to the break down of law and order in most institution with lecturers being incapable of exacting any form of punishment on culpable students. With reckless abandon certain members of these cults used to go about on the campuses, carrying out day light raids on hostels and classrooms, raping female students and carrying out robbery operations with no one in position to challenge them. In most instances they got away with their crimes.

The question has, however, been consistently asked, why could not the cult be dealt with? Many reasons can be proffered for this. Although many of them were known to fellow students, they were officially faceless, thus, cannot be brought to book. This is so because they are not registered by the campus authorities. The only fraternity registered and that, not on any campus, is the National Association of Seadogs which got registered in the 80s and went on to disband campus arms.

Secondly, many of the fraternities are believed to have powerful individuals who were members as students who give some kind of support to the student members. These individuals are believed to have constantly helped in getting the arrested cult members

out of trouble. In addition to this is the parental factor. Experience have shown that few parents ever swallowed the believe that their own beloved children, who left home as innocents could be members of a violent cult.

The third fact is that of the school authorities:

Rumors have it that no Vice Chancellor that was not involved with one cult or the other ever succeed. This is because fellow professors would usually find it difficult to stomach him, therefore, will do everything possible to frustrate him. One could then reason that these same powerful influences living on campuses as it were would also serve as rallying points to some of these cults. Of course, this makes it almost impossible to check the cults too. For instance, some Vice Chancellors could even move round their campuses with student body guards comprising of cult members. This gave a measure of legality and acceptability to cultism therefore.

The students' power factor is also very important:

Secret cult members were known to dominate student union, the faculty and even departmental associations. Since it was true that many of them were quite articulate and brilliant in their chosen academic fields, it was usually easy for them to root the support of the unwary. In some universities, they even rotated the presidency of the student union to avoid conflict of interest. Perhaps the most fundamental factor is the idea that students live by a different code of conduct from the society. Many factors which should be seen as sacrilege are therefore taken for granted. Added to that, the fear of the unknown, since their powers cannot be checked, everybody attempts to live with it. All culture of silence appeared to have weakened. All these were brought about by the unreasonable level of violence which became the order of the day on the Campuses with students reportedly killed almost on a weekly basis in cold blood (Newswatch, March 1994).

Modus Operandi

Most of the time, becoming a member of a cult is not by choice, you are usually conscripted. According to sources, in-coming students are carefully assessed by the different cults on arrival. Several factors come to play like, academic brilliance, family background, physical presentation and interactional gifts. Others include articulation and boldness (Saturday, Punch, October 18, 1997). The actual conscription comes in different forms but there are general rules. Someone you know approaches you, most of the time; it

is someone you also trust. He does not reveal his real mission to you. He may simply ask, "Do you want to belong?" or 'Do you want to fine?' or 'Do you want to be a big guy (boy)?' Most of the time, the fresher does not understand or really know what it is all about. When this happens, it means he has been marked 'out' or 'chosen'. His fate from this point is really out of his hands. The person who has cultivated him continues to make friends with him and eventually invites him to a 'party' or some other good alibi.

Usually, the unsuspected would be member goes along and he is eventually led to a secluded part of the campus where the scape-goat encounters several other members. When the scape-goat (would-be member) gets to a particular point led into, the first signal is mostly a whistle which alerts others that these are authentic emissaries. You then hear a voice of command which commands you to 'stop!' whatever discussion you may have been having with the other person or people you were coming with immediately stop and they become distant and unfriendly. Slaps come from left, right and centre. You are thoroughly brutalized physically and ordered to run in a particular direction. This usually takes place in the dark.

By this time the candidate is afraid, really scared and not in a position to think or resist. Eventually, he is blindfolded or told to close his eyes and taken through series of physically demanding chores (you may be told to lie down on soldier ants). Then you are eventually told what the cards are. Interestingly, you are not really presented with a choice. In that situation you have no choice, not at that point. Depending on a particular fraternity, this might continue from one to six sessions. These sessions are usually accompanied by serious brainwashing. You are told of some of the members who are regarded as role models either on campus or in the larger society. They will tell you, the initiate, you are about to join a prestigious organization which will change your entire life for the better. Such is told that he is about to move from being a 'boy' to a 'man' and from being 'blind' to being 'wise'.

These sessions include a lot of revelations. You suddenly discover that several people you know are members of the cult. At intervals, different drilling teams come to 'take you up' in turns. This simply means they come to 'beat you up'. Initiates are subjected to several experiences like, threats, screams, fears and many other subterfuges used. Initiates could be told to all climb a tree and then told that the last person to get

down is 'a dead man'. This, of course, leads to a scramble, a situation where initiates may be severally wounded, cases of broken arms and bruised faces are common. In certain occasions, lives are known to have lost in these exercises.

Cults in Institutions of Learning

Cult activities are found in our institutions of learning but are more prevalent in tertiary institutions in Nigeria with their activities which used to be very vicious and dangerous. The Nigerian constitution allows freedom of non-criminal associations of individuals. Institutions in Nigeria are therefore, allowed to have clubs and societies which may be religious, social, cultural and leadership prone. The clubs and societies are usually registered with the authorities of the institutions of learning and their activities are well monitored.

Societies, unlike cults and fraternities, do not pose any source of danger to students or any other member of the institutions and their activities are often no shrouded in secrecies. The horrible activities of cults have made the government to place ban on cultism in the institutions of learning. With this, their activities have been greatly curtailed and checkmated though not eradicated, they now operate in hidings. We shall now discuss membership of these cults and some of the activities embarked by them, as well as identify some of the existing ones in our institutions of learning.

Membership: Members of cults comprises students, staff and some others outside the academic environment who may act as patrons of the cults. Since cults are unregistered societies, their constitutions, activities and membership are not formerly known to the institution where they operate. Members are encouraged to recruit special students for the cult groups. Some of the members delight in the recruitment of new members as a way of venting the inhuman treatment given to them on someone else in revenge. In doing this, they may adopt the subtle means of being kind, friendliness even if it means pretending, invitation of a targeted student to a 'picnic' or party free of charge. Some people's position or parental background, according to Amao-Kehinde (2000) can influence their membership of a cult while some pass through old members who introduce them at their meetings.

At the meeting or during the drilling sessions, initiates are subjected to countless rules to which they are not even aware of. For instance, you are asked, 'who brought you here?' Naturally, an initiate will respond that it is Mr. X! The Mr. X comes out and screams, 'Did I, Did I and then follows this with a thorough beating. The lesson is very clear, don't answer questions carelessly. Records show that very rarely do initiates, having gone through this drilling session, turn out to resist membership. Usually, recruitment into secret cult is not by choice but by conscription though, certain things are initially used as baits to entice one unknowingly, close to them prior to their invitation of the initiate for a party or somewhere; or the cult member may tell you, 'I want to introduce you to some noble gentlemen somewhere'. While going in the dark, lonely or secluded area, they become distant and unfriendly with you. If the fraternity is not satisfied with you, you are quickly told 'song, you are not what we wanted'. You are then warned against 'blabbing' and allowed to go. Most are only too happy to escape with their skins. If the initiate is however, found worthy then you are made to go further. However, both the rejected and the would-be cultists are made to go through an important blood rite. Moreover, the more organized fraternities advertise their registration forms for initiate to buy. At the University of Nsukka, for example, registration fee used to be as high as ten thousand Naira (₦10,000.00) for the Black Axe and the Black Beret, the two leading cults on the campus then. This is besides regular contributions to run such expenses like purchase of guns, ammunitions and travels to other campuses to attend cult ceremonies. Each of the cults also stipulates some fine on their members who fail to turn up for meetings. This is usually, high amount though it varies from cult to cult. This huge financial requirement from members makes the cults attractive only to those who can afford to pay. They also have their code of conducts which regulates their activities and life of individual members and of the groups. For all the cult groups, the code of conducts is a written document to be learned and abided by.

Initiation Day

After series of drilling sessions, the D-day finally arrives when all prospective 'brothers' are brought face to face with the core members of the cult. This is usually a big event where several big shots from outside are present as guests. This would usually

include (for the older cults) professors, doctors, teachers, top administrative staff and others from the larger society. These people occupy the high table. There will usually be plenty to drink and mood is like 'celebration' really.

During initiation, the newly recruited members are subjected to series of severe inhuman and rigorous tests to ensure that they will be loyal to the cult. The initiation ceremonies are usually held at hidden and secluded places like river banks, cemeteries, shrines; schools located where there are no houses nearby and bushes. Agbugbem (2000) reveals that the events typically include the following:

1. You are asked if you really decide to join the fraternity.
2. You are told the creed and made to repeat it.
3. You are subjected to questioning sessions where your ability to think fast or quickly and logically is tested. For instance, what is the similarity between a woman and a bottle? Answer: Both have a 'hole'. Note from this point on, you are being assessed for a particular role within the body.
4. You are made to take a strong 'cocktail' that is a mixture of several drinks used to taste your 'staying power'.
5. Singing and dancing. This is usually orchestrated by a 'choir master', some of the songs are fairly common place but they could be twisted to suit the particular cult group. This includes some popular 'highlife' tunes. This aspect is usually full of funny and interesting events which are usually accompanied by drumming.
6. Location: this is usually a very secret place which, these days is mostly outside the campus. These locations are chosen very carefully and usually out of bounds.
7. Drinking: Everybody typically gets to drinking varying level of alcohol, although you are not expected to 'lose control'. Since the mood is celebratory, many of those present may get fairly high. Consumption of hard drugs and intoxicating drinks is usually rampant.
8. After the formalities are over, everybody now embraces you and rejoices with you for having completed the formalities and for having gone through the difficult initiation process. By this time you have psychologically accepted to be a member.

9. This is followed typically, by a celebration party where all the members; new and old are invited to come with their girlfriends. Most of the time, these ladies go to the parties unsuspected though some may suspect or actually know what is happening. After this consumption of hard drugs and intoxicating drinks come mass raping of the ladies which is also another means of transmitting HIV/AIDS.

Note: A Professor may be your initiator and he may therefore have to give you one or two severe slaps without bathing an eyelid. In this way, violence is somehow institutionalized in the psyche.

Covenants:

Agbugbuem (2000) opined that the covenant, according to the revelations given by students who denounced their memberships, could involve the following:

1. Administration of oaths of secrecy.
2. New members may be forced to drink 'covenant blood'.
3. Incisions made on their bodies using razor blades and other sharp body piercing instruments which is another means of transmitting HIV/AIDS.
4. Engaging in ritual and other activities which may involve macabre dances around bonfire or strange objects.

From the revelations, there are slide variations among the cults in terms of covenant taking though all of them use blood oaths. For the National Association of Airlords (Eiye), the prospective or new members are called 'rats'. At the initiation ground the rats are beaten with sticks, bottles and all sort of things. They are harassed, blindfolded with pieces of cloths and stripped naked with their hairs shaped off from the head with candle light. All these severe torture is to toughen them against future challenges, subdue their conscience and entrench violence. After completing the registration form, the initiate's thumb print is a signature signifying acceptance of being a member of the brotherhood. This document is kept jealously and even when you are being let off the hook, you are told that it could be used against you if you decide to defect or divulge the secrets.

Reasons for Becoming Cult Members:

Various reasons have been adduced for becoming a member of school cult (Adedayo 2001) to include:

1. Peer group influence
2. Protect themselves from attack and threats from other cults.
3. To ensure academic success at all cost.
4. Desire to boost ones ego.
5. Emulation of parents who are cult members.
6. Desire to subdue other colleagues by instilling fears into them.
7. Desire to seek revenge.
8. Desire to befriend the most beautiful girls on campus.
9. Desire to perpetuate evil intentions.
10. Reaction to frustrations and social pressure.
11. Desire for wealth.

These and other reasons induce the typical cult member to exhibit the traits described in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. He is therefore (1) Selfish (2) Covetous and fond of material properties. (3) Boastful and self exalted (4) Proud (5) A blasphemer who has no time for the things of holiness (6) Disobedient to Parents and authority (7) Unthankful and ungrateful (8) Unholy and without purity or reverence (9) Without natural affection. He may be willing to kill his own brother if asked to do so by the cult leader (10) some of them are homosexuals and sodomites. (11) A truce breaker (12) lacking in control of appetite and passions. (13) False accuser and liar (14) Fierce and savage and can kill and maim others in the society (15) Hater of good men (16) A traitor and betrayer (17) Heady, rash and reckless (18) A lover of pleasure who takes delight in sensual gratification (19) High minded, senseless and conceited (20) A pretender of goodliness and kindness in his quest to lure innocent students in becoming ungodly.

Symbols, Logo and Sign of Cults:

Cult members know themselves by their modes of dressing. Some may wear completely black outfit with dark glasses (Newswatch March, 1994). Almost all the cults have the human skull and femur as their symbols. Some of them use colours to differentiate or distinguish themselves from others. For example:

1. Black and White is common with the Pyrates
2. Yellow is common with the Buccaneers;
3. Black and Red is common with the Vikings;
4. Black and Black pick Axe is common with the black Axe;
5. Black and White with variations is common with the K.K.K.
6. Black Brassiere is worn by members of Black Brassiere;
7. The Buccaneers have a motto: Blood for Blood; there is also blood drops.

Some also have in their logo or sign, the dagger and blood drops. According to a one time Capoon (cult leader) as University of Jos, almost all of them have their signs in their way of mode greetings or handshakes. When asked to demonstrate the greetings during the interview he said, 'don't bite more than what you can chew but if you are careful in your observation you will see among guys '.

Types of Cults in our Institutions of Learning:

Various types of cults exist in our institutions of learning. Some are predominantly males while others are predominantly females. Some of the names are interesting, fearsome and mysterious. Some of them are as follows:

1. The Pyrates Confraternity (Sea dogs)
2. The Buccaneers (Sea Lords)
3. The Eiye Confraternity (Air Lords)
4. The Neo-black movement of Africa (Black Axe)

5. Daughters of Jezebel
6. The Black Berrets
7. The Vikings
8. The Amazons
9. The K.K.K.
10. The Mafia
11. The Trojan horse
12. Pink Ladies
13. Temple of Eden
14. The Mermaids
15. The Mgba, Mgba Brothers
16. Termites
17. The Fame
18. Knight Cadet
19. Executional
20. Black Brassiere

It should be noted that there are often violent rival clashes among these various cults, which result in casualties both among members and no-members.

Activities of the Cult Members:

The activities of contemporary cult members are often reckless with disastrous effects. These cult members often carry guns, knives, dangerous weapons and chemicals with which they use in settling scores with their enemies. Sometimes they use lethal weapons on those denouncing membership of their cults or even on fellow members with whom they have disagreement. They often rape, kidnap, torture, maim and kill those who confront them or cross their paths of operation. They are often involved in examination malpractices and may attack lecturers or members of the authorities who question their actions.

If a cult wishes to attack a rival cult; they may write to members of their cult from other institutions of learning to assist them in their attacks. When these visitors arrive they

seek out their local cult members who they may identify by their mode of dressing or cult signals. At times the photographs of their victims would have been sent along with their invitation letters which are written on their own codes and are undecipherable by non members. Sometimes their victims may be lured out to a desolate place where he will then be attacked. Sometimes when they cannot lure their victims out, they go after their victim and attack them in their hostels or even in the lecture rooms with impunity.

The activities of cult members are usually detrimental to the progress of the institutions in which they operate. Often their activities lead to destruction of lives, properties, and facilities in these institutions as well as the disruption of academic programmes. Some years ago, people only used to know the date of their matriculation and could never be sure of the date of graduation due to the activities of cult members (the author being a victim of this ugly experience). Cult members often indulge in the use of hard drugs during their meetings. Some who were innocent have therefore been turned in to drug addicts. The sexual urges embarked on by them during their meetings are also sources for the spread of HIV/AIDS virus, especially to innocent students they rape. Our citadels of academic excellence were gradually turned into citadels of violence and are yet to fully recover from the menace of these cult members. Sometimes they target and coerce young students from rich homes into their cults. Fears are instilled into the hearts of the young ones and they are trained to steal and use various foul means to collect money from their rich parents under false pretences.

These disastrous activities of cult members have reached a frightening dimension that, according to Kali (1995), it is no longer a campus problem but a national problem. The nation needs to be prepared to fight this social plague. It is time to sound the alarm of total war against the deadly activities of these cults on our institution of learning and the wider society at large.

Intervention: The Alarm and the Siren.

An alarm is a sound or signal indicating danger. The alarming increases in the negative activities of cults among our youths fill older and responsible members of the Nigerian populace with fear and trepidation about the future of our youths. There is need

to sound an alarm to alert passive members of the society about the dangers of increased cult activities in the educational sector and the nation at large. The Bible says; "My people perish for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). A lot of young children are ensnared into becoming cult members against their wish due to ignorance about the ways these cult members lure students into participating in their evil activities. It is time to sound an alarm to those entering the primary schools, to those passing the common entrance and gaining admissions into secondary schools and to the JAMBITES about the evils of cultism and the ways of recognizing and fleeing from such appearances of evil.

A siren, on the other hand, is a device that gives loud sound as a signal or warning. The spiritual siren that will set off the alarm against involvement of government of our youths in cultism should be put in place from the home if we wish to combat effectively the war against cultism in our land. Alarm signifies war and danger. We need to wage our war against cultism in the land and the alarm for the war should be sounded now. Parents need to sound the alarm by training and guiding their children against unequal yoke with unwholesome relationship and friendship. The Bible warns that, evil company corrupts good manners (Corinthians 15:33). Parents who are responsible for the proper upbringing of their children should sound alarm about their not joining bad companies. Parents should be interested in the social lives of their children associate with. Cult members are the type of children described in (Jeremiah 4:22) as being wise to do evil and having no knowledge of good. Our youths should not be contaminated by such people. The author of this write-up, on his part, is by thus sounding the alarm of warning against cultism in our land.

The government has a crucial role to play in sounding the alarm that will alert people about the evils of cultism. Military rules were established by force through coups which were planned in secrecy and often take place in the night. Our youths emulated the example of seizing power by force and this may account for the proliferation of cult activities during the military rule. We are now in a democratic government and there is need to sound alarm to our youths about not taking democracy as a step to undue freedom for indulging in activities which are counter productive to the development of the nation. The government should encourage educational sectors to hold talks, workshops and seminars on the evil of cultism and how such unscrupulous activities can be eradicated in the

nation. This awareness will reveal the intrinsic problems and seminars on our campuses and other institutions. Individuals on one to one basis should sound the alarm and set siren in motion to warn our youngsters against cultism. The students in their peer groups should organize themselves in blowing the siren that will alarm the sluggard among them to steer clear cultism. This could be very effective because of the power of peer pressure in influencing children.

Strategies in Combating the Evils of Cultism:

The following suggestions are proffered as strategies for waging a successful war against cultism in our institutions of learning.

- i. Youths should be sensitized about the evils of cultism through re-education using audio-visual aids depicting the horrors of cultism.
- ii. There should be instant expulsion of confirmed cult members from the various institutions of learning as deterrents.
- iii. Staff who are godfathers of cult members be dismissed. When there is one abating and sponsoring cultism, Nigerians will be on the way to sleeping with their eyes closed.
- iv. Stakeholders should ensure that the band of cultism is enforced through close monitoring of students' activities both within and outside institutions of learning.
- v. Sensitizing parents, students and the larger society as a whole about the dangers of cultism and how to nip the signs and symptoms of it in the bud before they get out hands.
- vi. Encouraging renouncement of cult membership, counseling and rehabilitating those involved by providing them further security through orientation programmes.
- vii. Security operatives should be trained on how to detect, handle and eradicates cultism in our campus and other institutions.
- viii. Annual anti-cultism rallies should be in our institutions of leaning and students uses as watch dog of those who have the tendency to be involved in cultism.
- ix. Stickers, posters and banners be used to inhibit enrolment on cults.

- x. Parents should pay more attention to the upbringing of their children and be wary of unreasonable demands about money from their children.
- xi. More job opportunities and poverty alleviation programmes be created and enforced to occupy school leavers to avoid idleness because an idle mind could be a workshop of Satan.
- xii. Students should be made less idle by providing them with challenging projects and assignments in order to keep them busy.
- xiii. Those concerned should ensure that only qualified students are admitted into any institution of learning. Some students who enter by dubious means join cults to assist them in completing their education.
- xiv. Students should be trained to report any strange gathering, behavior or acquisition of arms and ammunitions or others dangerous weapons by their colleagues.
- xv. Christian should intensify prayers and evangelism. When students are won for Christ they will avoid and resist cultism, if they are already in it: they will renounce their membership.

CONCLUSION

This intervention programme has raised an alarm about the menace of cult activities at all level of our educational system while the ban is enforced. The future of our nation is being threatened if adequate measures are not taken by stakeholders in education to exterminate this monster from among our youths who are the future leaders of tomorrow. The solution does not lie with the government alone. Parents, teachers, students and every member of the society have to work hand in hand towards the re-education and re-positioning of our youths in the right direction. As many as come by this write-up and read same need to examine ourselves and rededicate our lives to the service of God and humanity and spend our time money and energy for the eradication of cultism in our society and the promotion of the fear of God in our youths. By so doing, a final blow would have being dealt on cultism and cult activities in Nigeria our dear country.

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