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Silencing the Nigerian Masses through Occult Practices: A Leeway in Entrenching Corruption by the New Elites in Nigerian Democracy

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Silencing the Nigerian Masses through Occult Practices: A Leeway in Entrenching Corruption by the New Elites in Nigerian Democracy

Nina Perpetua Waapela

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I. INTRODUCTION

Nigerians, ye are bewitched! If not, what shall you then say to this? How did you plunge into this state of dyconsciousness? Catastrophes that would have shaken normal societies to their very foundations hit and leave you unfazed. Tyrants in military uniform whipped you with scorpions; only a few of you protested. Now their civilian inheritors are scourging you with serpents, and many of you respond with *rankadede!* Politicians and other public functionaries empty your public treasury and squander your patrimony/common wealth right before your very eyes; you pray to God to aid their effort. Time, there was,

when public office holders embezzled your money in millions of naira; now they do so in billions and trillions and many of you urge them on and envy their luck. In other lands, public figures go to jail for pinching your equivalent of 50,000 naira. In your country, Nigeria, the huger the amount one carts away, the more prestigious the national order of merit, the closer one gets to victory in the next elections.

History has not shown that western civilisation remove occult practices or eliminates superstition or tensions from the society. In the West at present, despite the high level of education and technological advancement, there is a sharp rise and a growing faith in astrology, witchcraft, spiritism, divination and fortune telling.¹ In Africa, numerous practices relating to occult forces abound in pre-literate, literate or modern societies. The Bible in the New Testament,² points out a number of important verses that speak of the "powers and principalities" which oppose God's rule (Ephesians 1:21, 3:10, 6:12; Colossians 1:16, 20:10; 1 Peter 3:22; Romans 8: 38). There is no gainsaying that, though westerners and/or scientists dismiss occult practices as primitive, native and superstitious, the belief in traditional medicine and occult attacks are so strong among many races of the world that only those who have not fallen victim of such deny their existence³ Indeed, majority of Africans harness these occult powers with the reason that there is no harm in making use of several methods to provide solutions to problems⁴ be it social, political, economic or therapeutic. In Nigeria, it can hardly be denied that occult practice and its usage constitute a common place not just among traditional Nigerians but also by some Nigerian Christians, Muslims and/or the educated.

The intractable corruption in Nigeria and the docility of the Nigerian masses to rise up and challenge the political elites' exploitation of their natural resources is strongly believed to have a spiritual dimension, aside the many other physical and social factors that may be advanced. This is backed up by the African sacred belief that natural occurrences or events that take place in the society have supernatural inclinations which though true cannot be subjected to scientific proof. Questions that suggest this line of thought in the present Nigerian democratic era are: Why is Nigeria so endowed with many natural resources, producing up to 2.6 million

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barrels of crude oil per day, and having about 82 million hectares of arable land still ranks amongst the poorest nations of the world? Why are meritocracy, accountability, transparency, competence and integrity jettisoned in Nigeria especially from 1999-date? Why is Nigeria among the few nations parading the highest number of church and mosque goers in the world, still ranks as one of the most corrupt countries? Why have Nigerians become so docile despite the country being termed the giant of Africa with a population put between 160-167 million? Why can't Nigerians rise and say no to their oppressors? Why is it that even when they do, the political elite are so sure that their opposition to wrong government decisions will not be sustained, unlike in other smaller African countries where opposition often has relatively longer lasting impacts? How are political elites able to 'read' the masses of Nigerians "We know Nigerians, they will quickly adjust"? Why do Nigerian politicians say that even if you don't vote for them, they will win? Why has the Nigerian Government been unable to learn from other countries where corruption and internal insurrection have been tamed?

a) *Clarification of Key Concepts*

To enable one get a clearer picture and understanding of this paper, there is need to clarify certain concepts. These concepts include occult practices, corruption and democracy.

i. *Occult practices*

An occult practice simply means a supernatural practice. Occult practices range from acts of divination, magic, prophecy and witchcraft. Specialists such as diviners, herbalists, magicians, priests/priestesses, prophets, and witch-doctors possess the knowledge and understanding of these practices and also help people to benefit from them for bad or good. A diviner, also called a soothsayer is one who learns the cause of a disease and provides the remedy. He or she also has power to divine either through communication with the ancestral spirits or handling of various objects and performing various rites. An herbalist in the traditional culture has knowledge of the various herbs. Herbalists also combine medicine with divination and mystical powers of the spirit- world. A magician is one who endeavours not only to govern certain natural or supernatural forces, but produces effects by saying words and doing certain acts via the use of charms, spells and rituals. Dopamu thus affirms magic as, the act of the influencing course of events by means of supernatural communication and manifestation of power by means of occult control of nature and invocation of particular spirit-aid.⁵ One recalls that in the Old Testament of the Bible, Egyptian magicians were able to perform miracles similar to those performed by God through Moses. A priest, especially in West Africa, serves at the shrines of the various divinities. He or she offers sacrifices as well as serves as a medium of

spiritual communication. A prophet traditionally is an oracle-giver. He or she famous for their knowledge of the future and according to Gehman,⁶ providing an important service to a community and advising people on when and how to battle issues of life is also part of their duties. A witch is one who is involved in practices of spiritism. He or she is a medium of communication with spirits. All these African religious specialists play important roles even in election activities as politicians and aspiring candidates consult them from time to time.

ii. *Corruption*

Corruption is a faceless and multifaceted monster; it is not easy to define. However, the most popular and simple definition of corruption is that, "it is the abuse of public power for private benefit."⁷

iii. *Democracy*

Democracy has been ascribed different meanings and interpretations depending on its application. Etymologically, the word democracy is a derivative of two Greek words, *demos* (people) and *krates* (rule). Universally, democracy's most accepted definition is Abraham Lincoln's postulation that it is the government of the people by the people and for the people.¹ With a democratic system of government, it is believed that the voice of the people will be heard and their latent wisdom will prevail.⁸ Hence, the people, through elections, freely choose those who will represent and govern them well. Athens was indeed, the first city state to practice democracy where ordinary citizens were allowed access to offices and courts. Democracy is however critiqued as cumbersome, slow and inefficient, due to time; democratic nations have become the standard of human society.

II. *AFRICAN AND NIGERIAN DEMOCRACY*

Democracy has metamorphosed through various phases and models in countries where it is being practiced. Many African States have tried to justify the ineffectiveness of their democratic leadership by using a qualifying adjective as "emerging democracy" which implies, evolving or developing. These 'so called' emerging democracies are countries where democracy is yet to be fully entrenched. Hence, it is still undulating, fluctuating and/or punctuated by colonialism and (de) colonialism, civil wars, military coups, rise and fall of tyrants, thuggery, militancy, election violence, and flawed electronic elections among many. However, the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) (11) sees, emerging democracies as countries with a history of autocratic rule or civil unrest which have a purposeful process of democratization albeit with weak and inexperienced institutions.⁹ There are seven African countries at the moment with emerging democracies. These include Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central Africa Republic, Guinea, Kenya, Mozambique and Nigeria as well as the self-declared breakaway Republic of

Somalia. To backing up this claim, the 2010 index records of a survey of 11.3 percent of the population of the 167 countries with democracies reveals that: "37.1 percent fall within flawed democracies, 14.0 percent fall within hybrid regimes, while 37.6 percent fall within the category of authoritarian regimes. Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa regions rank the bottom of the list on the index."¹⁰ While it can be argued that the benefits of democracy outweigh its pitfalls, the foregoing evidences reveal the slow rate of growth and development of democracy on the African continent and Nigeria epitomises the chart. In its fifty-five years of flag independence, Nigeria has made several experiments with political systems of governance including the British parliamentary model and the presidential system of the United State of America. There was also a spate of continuous military dictatorship in the country's rulership.

At present, Nigeria is experiencing 17 years of uninterrupted democracy from 1999 to date, with a far less competence in governing. While it can be argued that through these stages, from 1960 to date, the country has experienced several economic booms via petroleum (no doubt assisted by high oil prices), has won external debt relief and consolidated its banking system, has perpetuated growth in her foreign reserves giving rise to the Excess Crude Account (ECA), and has had a more reinforced notion of her citizenship rights, there is a near lack of meaningful development. From these and other factors, a report on the state of health of Nigeria's democracy, captured by Fund for Peace (FFP) in 2012, declared that Nigeria ranks among the top ten failed states in Africa and 14th in the World. Nigeria trails behind Pakistan, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire, Central Africa Republic, Iraq, Yemen and Haiti.¹¹

a) *The Emergence of the New Elites in Nigerian Democracy from 1999 till Date*

The genesis of undemocratic governance in Nigeria is rooted in the colonial governance era. The colonial rulers dove-tailed Nigerian political leadership in an authoritarian system by monopolising economic and political leadership. The new and indigenous leaders who took charge of the affairs of governance in 1960 became democrats in due course but manifested blatant prejudice and corruption against the expectations that after independence, the country would eradicate the prejudices and corruption of the colonialists. In Nigeria, hard core empirical evidences perhaps, is no longer necessary to prove that corruption has turned full vicious cycle in the Fourth Republic. It has permeated the Federal and State Ministries, Local Government Councils, Social and traditional institutions among others. The result is that Nigeria has been in an unfortunate situation in which the "state ... finds it difficult to mediate in the conflict in the society between classes and within classes ... High premiums [have]

become placed on power and...in a leader or groups...in Nigeria, any government in power finds it difficult to claim legitimacy, only power."¹²

Hence to many Nigerians, the end justifies the means. This is evident in the disposition of the Nigerian political leaders who at present, only concern themselves with how they can fraudulently milk the country dry. They are selfish, corrupt, inconsiderate and greedy. The new elites have systematically saturated the society with the Nigerian factor characteristic of an overdose of corruption, bribery, nepotism, tribalism, chaos and anarchy, religious bigotry and political intolerance which undermine any water-tight internal control in the public system. Commenting on the nature of these Nigerian elites, Joseph and Otite in Asamu said:

They represent essentially the capitalists who depend on the state machinery for survival. They are also a major player in the ethno-religious game for the exploitation and manipulation of non-elites, usually directed towards personal elites, group interest, which mostly promotes division and hatred among people in pluralistic societies.¹³

Concurring, a political scientist, Ekeh, has captured the present democratic era, drawing a sharp distinction from what Nigerian leaders were before 1999 and what is obtained now:

The primordial/ethical/pre-colonial and the modern/national/post-colonial, the former exacting near sacred loyalty, the later begrudged with faint political observance. The curious situation has led to the relativisation of morality in Nigeria, as what is wrong and condemnable in one republic is but right and commendable in the other.¹⁴

Indeed, the modern/national/post-colonial Nigeria is an era where a 'cabal' has become a buzzword for describing a rapacious clique of bandits holding the nation by the economic jugular. It is an era where politicians become billionaires overnight not for industry, hard work or any creative ingenuity that adds value to the society. They own private jets, exotic cars, expensive yachts, choice houses in exotic locations like Dubai, Monaco, London, Germany, Barbados, America, Switzerland and others,¹⁵ while the masses of Nigerian only look with mouth agape at the dizzying speed of their rise, wondering how their political leaders flaunt such wealth in the midst of grinding poverty. Indeed, politics in Nigeria today has produced a crop of political leaders who are indescribable. Supporting this view, Clark, according to Sanusi, said:

Under democracy, the arena of public discourse is routinely flouted by appalling deportment of men who in the past have not acquitted themselves as prosper and in persons to be designated as statesmen. These leaders claim statesmanship

status but in the true sense of the word, one doubts whether it will be right to confer them with such appellation. If all the nation can boast of is these men with shady/cloudy and condemnable careers in and out of public life, then the country still has a long way to go in its redemptive journey of salvaging the nation in all spheres begging for attention.¹⁶

b) *Silencing the Nigerian Masses via Occult Practices*

In spite of the changes brought almost a century ago by Christianity, Islam and education in Nigeria, occult practices are still being harnessed by Nigerian politicians and others today not only because of their availability and inexpensiveness but also because of their efficacy. Nigerian politicians employ these powers to ensure their victory at the polls and insulate themselves from any harm or opposition. The various occult means by which some Nigerian political elite manipulate the electoral processes and come into power are analysed here-under.

i. *Magic*

The belief in magic is still pervasive not only because magic exists, also because it has an objective reality. According to Babalola, the people still believe that they could get whatever they want through magic.¹⁷ Basically, there are two types of magic; good and bad. Bad magic is feared by people and society opposes it whereas, 'good magic' is primarily used for protection against evil forces that are found everywhere. Both bad and good magical powers are harnessed for private and public benefits. Both magical powers are also enshrined in amulets, body marks, charms, feathers, teeth of lions, crocodiles and snakes, powder and seeds and are wrapped in leather and worn on the neck, waist or upper arm or as rings. These days, however, such magical items are concealed under clothes to avert suspicion of their owners' indulgence in such widely unacceptable acts. Sometimes, such mystical powers are embodied in incantations filled in little horns of small antelopes or sewn in lion or leopard skins, making the horns and skins as powerful as the animals were when they were alive. Indeed, many political elites have no doubt that when the charms are prepared according to regulations; they potently serve for the various purposes they are prepared for. Similarly, there are taboos that accompany each magical acts/materials so that they do not lose their potency.

There are many ways by which Nigeria political elites are known to use magical powers to gain entry into public offices and to emerge victorious at elections. One of such ways is by casting magical spells on political opponents by calling out such opponents' names and the electorates of the various Local Government Areas and Constituencies of interest at certain shrines. This is similar to what was practiced in the Jewish society by the appropriation of certain

peculiar symbolic actions. Citing an instance Ndiokwere described the use of symbolic magic as nothing but the last echoes of magic practices ... Symbolic action is described in 2Kings 13:15ff, [where] Elisha told the King of Israel to shoot with the bow and the arrows in the direction of Syria in order to secure victory over Israel.¹⁸ Another kind is productive magic which is harnessed to gain favour in politics. This kind of magic enables the user to get party nominations and hold government offices, irrespective of any credible character or abilities for delivery, and to occupy such public offices for as long as possible. Supporting the claim, Babalola stated that a political leader can come into political office by the use of magic and if such a leader is to be retained, magic could be used. Also, if a leader is no more needed, magic could be used in ejecting him [or her] from the office.¹⁹ A clue is given by Gehman on how magical incantations are appropriated by these political elites:

Early in the morning, the person rubs the magic on his [or her] hands and swallows some medicines while saying these words: 'I take this medicine to help me find favour with the electorate, when I meet them today'. When he [or she] approaches the work place of INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission) concerned, he [or she] rubs the medicine on his or her face, on the head and on his or her toes and heels, saying these words: "if the back of the head ever became the face, let it be so today. If the sun ever rose from the West, let it be so today. I make all political enemies and opponents the heels, the back of the head, while I myself will be the face and the toe; I now open my eyes to see my request and need met by the INEC officials in charge. He or she then rubs the magical power medicine on the hands saying, 'I mix my word with the words of the resident INEC Commissioner like this powder in my hands'.²⁰

With these words, the officer(s) in charge will listen to him or her and many times, their requests and desires are granted speedily. Magical powers are also used by the Nigerian political elites to make a court judge decide in their favour in an election dispute. To achieve this, magical powers may be placed in the palm of the hand and blown into the air, while stating their desire. They powder may also be poured at the place where the court case will be discussed.²¹ It is believed that the magical powder "blinds" the eyes of the judge to dispense judgment in the politicians' favour. It has been discovered that the use of magic was and is still very important in Yoruba politics and has far reaching effects on the people in one way or the other. For instance, the role of magic in OPC, which members of the society enabled to arrest the *toombolo* because a menace to the Ogbomoso community cannot be forgotten in a hurry amongst the people.²²

Similarly, Nigerian political elites harness magical powers to protect themselves from enemies, robbery attacks, party thieves and thugs of their opponents. They do this by wearing charms and amulets. Among the Tiv of Central Nigeria, such magical protection is conceived in the *dufu* (invisibility charm). The *dufu* is a body protector charm which makes its holder invisible to his or her enemies. With the *dufu*, one can transform into a lower creature like a spider or wasp and escape capture when trapped. Affirming the claim, Shishima says, "when one *nyordufu* (becomes invisible), he [or she] maintains his [or her] position till anger is averted ...".²³ Among the Esan of Edo State of Nigeria, there is a similar practice of traditional bullet-proofing like other types of bullet proofing in Africa. Among these people, bullet-proofing practices and incantations are used to activate and stimulate the occult power (e.g. the Agbara in Yoruba). These magical powers are designed for performing feats like vanishing at critical times; warding-off thieves from places of residence, and concealing ill-acquired property while getting juicy political jobs and promotions. There are those obtained for detecting poison in drink and food since the politicians themselves do not trust their companions or friends. Attesting to the efficacy of magical powers, Awolalu argued that, although these mystical, preternatural and esoteric powers are virtually inexplicable, they cannot escape notice when they are manipulated by those who have access to them.²⁴

ii. Witchcraft

Witchcraft is practised by Africans. Practice as used here is engaging to the power of a supernatural agency. Throughout the African continent, discourses on witchcraft or sorcery are intertwined with and shrouded in mysticism or spiritism. In the contemporary Nigerian society too, witchcraft is employed in modern politics.

Gescheire affirms this view:

There [is a] close conceptual link for these people between witchcraft and power ... Most importantly ... not only to local politics within the village but also to modern relations to the state and national politics... Though, witchcraft is a 'traditional' obstacle to development and the emergence of the new inequalities ... I stumbled upon all sorts of interventions of occult forces in modern politics. I also noticed that such incursions could have highly different implications for the course of political processes.²⁵

In local politics among the Tiv of central Nigeria for example, a person comes to authority not just because he is strong in personality, but also because he is rich *intsav* (witchcraft) and has mastery of *manyakombo* (ritual) which by nature inspires and attracts respect for him.

Further, a political god-father could purchase the powers of witchcraft for his son(s) or member(s) of his political party. To buy witchcraft powers to win elections, they may obtain toe and/or finger nails, hair, bones and teeth of human beings and some animals like crocodiles, hyena either whole or parts. They also harness claws, fur, horns and skulls of certain animals as directed by the traditional priest/priestess or prophet/prophetess and diviner(s). Also, the penis and clitoris of a youth, depending on the political request, are said to be used particularly because these human parts are highly potent in witchcraft for the killing of party opponents or enemies. Such body parts are sometimes materials for sacrifice. The essence of the sacrifice is that if the prediction is good and favourable, it would help the client to enjoy the fortunes. However, if the prediction is bad, the essence is to ward-off evil. A widely reported proof of these acts of witchcraft by politicians is an event that occurred in 2004. Acting on the petition of a complainant received on July 26, 2004, the police raided two shrines belonging to two deities namely *Ogwugwuisiala* and *Ogwugwuakpu*. Consequently, Inspector General of Police, Mr. Tafa Balogun, received a presidential directive to personally take charge of the on-going investigation into the Okija shrine where the police recovered 20 human skulls and a fresh corpse.

It was also reported that the corpses had some missing parts- hands, genitals or heads. Some of the corpses had decomposed while others were still fresh. The police arrested 30 *Juju* priests, who were said to be ministering to the deities. The police also discovered about 10 registers said to be containing relevant information about the corpses and other activities of the adherents of the deities. It was also reported that the registers ... contained names of the people, including prominent personalities who visit the shrines.²⁶

A team of police officers led by the then Anambra State Commissioner of Police, Felix Ogbaudu, visited the Okija shrine where they made some gruesome discoveries. Notable amongst the clients of this shrine were the late Chief Victor Okafora.k.aEzogo who reportedly had a dispute with one Nzeribe, a member of the House of Representatives. Not long afterwards, Ezego died in a ghastly motor accident believed to have been caused by the gods. The insinuation was that Governor Ngige and other government functionaries that patronised the shrine are cult members.²⁷ Also in the heart of Yoruba land, there are shrines where human beings are found with all their private parts removed. Some of such shrines are located in Ijaiye area of Abeokuta Nigeria, Ile-Ife and some shrines in Benin City. Kunle maintained that, "The so called pressure groups all connected to what looks like Okija in all parts of Nigeria."²⁸

Some witchcraft practitioners revealed another way of acquiring or transferring occult power from a political god father to this godson or vice versa. Most commonly, a godfather may sometimes take the godson or a to-be godson for initiation into the secret cult for such a son to acquire witchcraft powers or be fortified and to find favour with the electorates' and INEC officers during campaigns and elections. This is usually done in stages. First, the political godson is indoctrinated concerning the benefits of the actual initiation, and then comes the initiation rite. In the initiation room, the godfathers and their initiated and to-be initiated son(s) would wear a prescribed cloth (red, black and/or white), or may sometimes be naked during the rite(s). Then the overall godfather, often referred to as "Lord Spiritual and Temporal", will show the intending initiates different sizes and shapes of power after which, comes the initiation proper. The godfather and/or godson are then taught how to use witchcraft and where to keep it. Gehman has given a mental picture of what obtains:

A mixture of gruel and blood, prepared at the shrine are drunk by both. They sing and dance, bumping their naked buttocks together several times. The [godfather] sits with [his] legs wide apart, facing [his godson] who does same. The [godfather] places a horn between [his] legs. After saying some words, the [godson] stretches forward to take the horn. Cuts are made on the [godson] by the [godfather] in the following places: the pubic area, tongue, fingers and buttocks. Blood is transferred to each other. Certain powders are rubbed into wounds made by the cuts. This becomes the source of power for witchcraft.²⁹

To seal the powers of the transfer of power, certain acts of incest must take place. While a male must commit incest with his daughter, a female must do same with her son. Alternatively, intercourse with an animal may take place. After the initiation rite, any time the political godson scratches his cuts, applies the spoken word or points his finger towards the Nigerian electorate or the masses, a good number are bewitched into doing the bidding of such political figure(s). Commenting on the prevalence of the godfather-son syndrome in Nigerian democracy, Isiguzo noted:

After eight years of unbroken democratic experience in 2007, the green horns that held sway gradually metamorphosed into leaders whose thoughts simply became law. They literally took over the political landscape, dictating the pace on how, when, where and why things should be done their way. Thus, a new crop of political godfathers was born. Across the country, the story was the same. The godfathers directed affairs and, in most cases, ensured that their surrogates stepped into their shoes.³⁰

Sometimes, a to-be political aspirant or political elite asks secretly from friends how he or she can meet the most powerful witch doctor within an area. Arriving at the house of such a witch, the cost of the purchase is stated. Yet, some of these Nigerian political elite may purchase witchcraft powers at a cost and are given spirits which live in a gourd. These spirits become the servants of such elites. Whenever the political figure wants to bewitch someone, such as a contending political opponent within or outside his or her political party, he or she would send the given-spirits. It is believed that sacrifices are made to the spirits quarterly, twice or once a year. These sacrifices which may include animals (such as cows or goats) or humans.

iii. *Divination*

From the ancient times till the present, people have been divining (predicting) the future through various means. In the present democratic era, the Nigerian elites often employ divination methods to silence the Nigerian masses/electorate in politics. According to Gehman divination may be done as follows:

[He] divines with arrows and the names of the different cities are written on each arrow and placed in a quiver. Those arrows are shaken and then thrown out in order to learn the will of the god. Whichever arrow comes out first reveals the city to attack. Or the arrows were thrown up into the air and the direction they faced on the ground showed the direction of attack.³¹

Nigerian political elites also hold consultations with their family or ethnic idols or ancestral images. In addition to this, they sometimes raise household gods in the privacy of their bedrooms in respect of their political career in order to render the masses of Nigerians docile, while they continue to loot the treasury without question or remain in positions of authority unchallenged. Also, through spirit possession, these political elites may right at the beginning unearth the political terrain in order to determine their political fate. In this mediumistic divination, the requests of the political clients are revealed through specialists or cult attendants who become possessed by a spirit after a worship session usually characterised by intense drumming, ritual dance and songs. Among the Tiv, manyazôv (nature spirit) cults abound and are patronised by many politicians.

Politicians also employ live and dead animals to divine the will of the gods for their political ambitions. Some Africans, including Nigerian traditionalists such as diviners or priests, know many animals that have special meanings in life's endeavours. At the ordinary level, the specialists meet the political requests of these elites by merely observing the movements of certain animals. Sometimes, a politician, under the instruction of a traditional specialist, may ask the animals various questions or state their political needs to them. The

noises such animals make reveal the electoral fate of the inquirers. Yet, some are requested by these religious specialists to live in the anus or womb of certain animals like cows. Sometimes animal parts like liver and heart are examined by diviners to reveal someone's political fate. Further, messages may be derived when shoulder blades of sacrificed animals are placed in a fire and cracks develop. Gehman affirms that in getting messages from the sacrificed animal, these cracks are studied and used to divine.³² At a more supernatural level, many elites such as Governors, Local Government Chairmen and Councillors are made to bury live animals such as sheep or cows in their official residences, homes; as stories of these abound. An anonymous person narrated his experience:

I was put into a bee hive, and then thrown in a big fire which was made outside a small house. As the fire flamed, I heard someone call my name. I looked but didn't see anyone. I was given something that looked like red seeds to swallow. I was told to repeat some words after the voice. This I did. Cuts were made on my body and medicines rubbed on them. These cuts ... [are] the source of my power whenever he rubbed them. Certain instructions were given. I was then not allowed to wash or drink water for seven days after reaching home.³³

Nigerian politicians are known to have made innumerable animal sacrifices to such specialists with the hope of knowing their electoral fate. This star divination practice was very common in ancient Babylon in 2000BC and/or attacking his or her star with is still practiced also along in Asia beginning with China, Japan, Central Asia, North Africa as well as parts of Arabia and some places in the West.

Star reading (astrology) as a divination type is also harnessed by the Nigerian elites in unveiling their political ambition(s). Certain Africans hold a strong belief, that the sun, moon and planets are living beings and each "houses" a god. In this divination type, the path (zodiac) of the sun, moon and planets is divided into twelve parts, each represented by an emblem such as ram, bull, twins, lion, virgin, scorpion, archers, goat, water carrier and fish. With the astrological divination, predictions of a person's/politician fortune, including his or her life, wealth, friendship and/or attacking his or her star with spells. This divination had been in practice about 3,000 years ago in Chaldea and Babylon, spreading to Greece, Rome and Europe.³⁴

Other divination types which Nigerian politicians elites engage including the use of written symbols and cards with attached meanings. Others throw dice or stones to observe whether an odd or even number will appear. Some others, through the specialists, divine and examine the lines on their clients' palms, or forehead to determine their political fate and offer them solutions if the readings reveal evil.

c) *Effects of Occult Practices on the Masses in Nigerian Democracy*

The masses of Nigerian are believed to be spiritually manipulated by the political elites, such that they are unable to ask their political representatives (councillors, assembly men/women, senators, the president or governor) basic questions that border on governance such as: what they exactly earn, the difference between their stipulated salary and their actual income, how much their constituency allowances are, how much of it actually goes to their constituency and how much the nation spends on security votes. When people are disenfranchised and/or elections are massively rigged or unfairly cancelled, they hardly object but rather resign to fate. One notes that the option A4 under the Ibrahim Babangida-led administration produced an acceptable national leader in June 1993. However, Babangida cancelled the election that was largely held as fair and free by all sensible Nigerians. The masses did nothing! Furthermore, the 2007 elections were so awful that the key beneficiary felt compelled to admit as much in his inaugural speech as president. Sanusi record that, "The riggings that took place during Obasanjo's eight-year presidency took electoral injustice to another level, and ordinarily in a politically sensitive nation, a revolution, like a volcanic eruption, should have erupted, dismembering the nation in the process."³⁵ Yet, the 2011 election turned out to be not only flawed, but one of the most deceptive and divisive in Nigeria's electoral history.

Another perceived effect of occult practices on the Nigerian masses is that they have become inexplicably docile such that Osundare said, "when they should kick, they temporize, when they are to smite, they smile."³⁶ A good example is President Jonathan's ill-informed action on removal of Fuel subsidy and hike in the price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS). Mr President in a statement during the uprising said, 'No going back'. One could easily imagine the presidential advisers and cabinet members saying, we know Nigerians: They will only shout for a few hours then go back to business as usual. We know Nigerians: they will quickly adjust.³⁷ indeed; Nigerians have really adjusted as the presidential advisers predicted. Expressing dismay at the docility of the masses of Nigerians, Osundare wonders:

Why is it that Nigerians no longer blush? How did [they] come to develop a skin that is so thick that any arrows of degradation, no needles of dehumanization are ever sharp and violent enough to penetrate our body and rouse our senses? How did [they] nerves slide into their present state of stupor? ... are [they] so reprobate that we become so forgiving, so oblivious of the crimes of those who rule us because [they] have lost the capacity to recognise their malefactions?³⁸

Another effect of the use of occult practices by political elites on the Nigerian masses is that they do not show anger with their deplorable, pauperised state, nor do they frown at the corruption of their political elites. This complacency, more than their helplessness and hopelessness, is revealed as they now gain much joy and fulfilment listening to whispers of the deals in high places involving huge sums of money that they did not believe were obtainable in the country. The complacency of the masses of Nigerians of the public treasury by political elites is what Achebe records in his novel, *A Man of the People*:

'Let them eat', was the people's opinion, after all when white men used to do all the eating, did we commit suicide? Of course not. And where is the all-powerful white man today? He came, he ate and he went, but we are still around. The important thing then is to stay alive; if you do, you will outlive your present annoyance ...³⁹

One other noticeable effect of occult practices on the Nigerian masses is that the electorates dissociate themselves from the activities on the political scene while the political class continue to have a field day as a result of the disillusionment of the masses. This strategy they employ because they argue that the field of politics must not be left in the hands of 'charlatans'. When serious people and starving persons turn away from participating in politics, those who have nothing to offer invariably take over. As Fayemi stated, understandably, if you make political discourse more negative as some do, you deliberately turn ordinary people off politics; more people become cynical and stop paying serious attention to politics.⁴⁰

Another effect of occult practices by politicians on the Nigerian masses in the present democratic era is that the people wallow in abject poverty in the midst of obscene affluence. As the Bible says, "I see the wickedness under the sun where slaves ride on horses and the sons walk."⁴¹ The result of this is that the masses have developed other unholy means of survival instead of rebelling against at such oppressive structures. They become vulnerable to the scheming political elites, who expend them in gang fights over electoral wards with a few N100 notes, propelling them to destabilise the towns and cities for sectarian advantages. Christians and Muslims rather than remain steadfast in their prayers and live according to the scriptures, engage in praise singing of these corrupt elites in their various strategies of looting money from the national treasury. Further an article in *The Nation* has provided a detailed description of the scenario insight into their antics thus:

If you are poor you are told, it is because you, have strayed from the straight and narrow way... these preachers portray every crook in power as God-chosen, even when that power has come through rigged

elections, occult means and murderous brigandage. They conduct thanksgiving services for the notorious political jobbers and perform home-coming ceremonies for returnees with looted fortunes. When the wealthy crook hands them the key to a luxury car or private jet), they shower the 'cheerful giver' with blessings, beseech god to prosper his ways', and extol his virtues to the heavens.⁴²

Another influence of occult practices on Nigerian democracy is the lawyers, who ordinarily should be upholding the rule-of-law, cluster around to defend the fraudulent acts perpetuated by the political elites at the polls or in their offices. It is laughable that platoon of Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SAN) and other lawyers are always eager to defend these elites whose cases have no merit in employing much legal jargon. Many, like Shika noted, use all sorts of technicalities to frustrate the cases in court, ... ten thousand SANS will speak and make [these] suspects less guilty.⁴³ One recalls the smiling faces of the subsidy scam suspects when arraigned in court as shown on the electronic media. The smiling faces of Mr. Mahmud Turkurand Mr Mamman Nasril during their arraignment at the Ikeja High Court for fraudulently benefiting from the subsidy scheme speak volumes. Shika maintained that the smiles on their faces made mockery of Nigerians, adding that "... [They were] unrepentant in their carriage and totally unlaced by the charges against them, obviously because in their estimation, the case was going nowhere."⁴⁴

In the face of the occult practices by political elites in Nigeria, even prayer, a religious rite that is believed to cause God to interfere in the affairs on earth, can hardly have much impact. Despite thousands of churches/mosques and the millions of Christians/Muslims, praying loudly corruption is on the increase. Thus God himself, lamenting on this unfortunate situation, says, "behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear too heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59).⁴⁵ Many Nigerians have become adulterous, idolatrous and religious flirts; they have thus become 'powerless' because they are neither core Christians, Muslims nor traditionalists. The resultant effect is what God says: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: So because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spit you out of my mouth (Revelation 3: 15-16)."⁴⁶

Having established that the new elites in Nigerian democracy harness occult practices to enable them engage in corrupt practices apprehended, the next section of this paper makes recommendations to curb this trend.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

To curb the trend of massive, unchecked corruption facilitated by the occult practices by the new elites in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made:

- Nigerian elites via the rule of law should change their attitude toward the people while the Nigerian masses need to change theirs or to those in position or authority. Too often, Nigerian masses encourage the criminality of their rulers by kowtowing to their disdain, denying themselves any claim of self-respect.
- Nigerian masses who largely claim to be Christians should wholeheartedly serve their God and stop being day-time Christians while at night and in secret visiting the traditional African shrines and altars. Only then can their prayers be heard by God, and their pauperised and deprived state be salvaged.
- Through dynamic public education and legislative enforcement through a sanctified and proactive judiciary, Nigerians can achieve their goals and create an environment free of corruption. Through such enlightenment programmes and seminars, bribery can be discouraged while through legislative enforcement, prosecution of bribery offences must come with stringent penalties to make people desist, from all forms of corrupt practices.
- Further, corruption, especially political corruption, can be eliminated with real electoral reform which would guarantee credible elections and further eject those who fail the electorates.
- There should be the provision of infrastructure and provision of equal access to public education, healthcare and social services that will enable the masses' attain their full potentials. Those in power who cannot ensure all of these should be honourable enough to resign from such public positions.

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper has brought to limelight the various mystical forces and agencies, such as supernatural agencies like divination, magic, sorcery and witchcraft, which Nigerian politicians use to silence the masses and emerge victoriously at the polls gaining entrances into public offices. The paper has also revealed the effects of such occult practices on the Nigerian masses to include low self-esteem, high rate of crime and general undevelopment. The paper this concludes that steps need to be taken urgently to curb this evil trend.

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