

**AFRICAN TRADITIONAL OATH AS A MECHANISM FOR PEACE AND
SOCIAL ORDER**

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Abstract

The thrust of this paper is on the African traditional oath as a mechanism for peace and social order within the framework of Afro-Communitarianism. The quest for peaceful coexistence occupies the central tenet of Afro-communal living which is the doctrine that emphasizes oneness, togetherness, relationality, and sociality of human persons. However, the desire to achieve this has suffered a setback as the conflict remains an inevitable end in the human circle. In pursuant of this goal, the forbearers of African traditional society instituted certain mechanisms to salvage society and man from the Hobbesian state of nature. These measures evolved to handle confrontations and the reality of social disorder in their various manifestations. One such mechanism is traditional oath-taking which is suited and capable of maintaining and sustaining justice, peace, and harmony in the community. Despite the vital role played by this mechanism in conflict resolution and the establishment of justice within the Afro-communal space, the paper observes with dismay that contemporary African societies relegated this mechanism to the background and have rather embraced the Western justice system with its attendant frustrations and failures. Using the dialectical and critical methods of philosophical investigation, the paper advances some moral arguments in favour of the African traditional oath (within the Anaang Thought System) for the establishment of justice, conflict resolution, maintenance, and sustenance of peace within the parameters of the Afro communal setting.

Keywords: Afro-communitarianism, Traditional-Oath, Peace, justice, Social Order

Introduction

African societies are cemented and expressed based on inter-human relations in almost all spheres of life, ranging from marriage, settling of disputes and admission into societies. They are a religious group of people, and one of their religious elements in covenant-keeping is a traditional oath which has formed the existential substratum of their lives. These, operate mainly as preventive measures against the potential threat to peace and tranquillity as well as to cultivate a good relationship, mutuality, friendship and love among people on one hand, and between the people and the pre-natal forces on the other hand.

Within the Afro-Communal setting, material things are owned and shared, and land remains the basis and the centrality of materiality. This is so because land connects the people within the African ontological space. According to Diana-Abasi (2020:11), there is “a matrix between land and man within the framework of (African) ontology”. The materiality of land and all that pertains to it do sometimes throw up certain interests and clash of interest that becomes a clog in the wheel of human relations if not properly handled. Traditional Oath presents itself as one of the mechanisms for properly handling such. On this purview, Umotong (2015) conceived African Culture as unique, as their communalism knows no bounds. In property, knowledge, ideology, and virtually every aspect of the life of an African person is that of the community he lives in. In addition, an oath prevents unfaithfulness and helps to build trust as an important capital in human relations. A covenant made in form of oath-taking, either before divinity or religious emblems makes people comport themselves well in society. Oath, therefore, gives meaning and cohesion to society and enhances the propensity and the capacity of people to seek the good of others and not just their good only.

In African Traditional Religion, the human person is expected to be in a covenant relationship with her fellow human and her object of worship. The implication of this is that any harm done to one member affects the other. Thus, it becomes necessary for the members of a cultic or religious group to seek the well-being of one another and avoid any action that amounts to the breaking of a promise or covenant. With this in mind, the traditional Africans often handled the phenomenon of oath with utmost care to move society forward. Another point of interest in covenant-keeping is the corporate type of existence resulting from it. This is because the oath binds people together; thus, a member does not live her life alone. She is a member of the corporate body. On this purview, Menkiti in his endorsement of Mbiti's view of personhood asserts that "without incorporation into this or that community, individuals are considered to be danglers to whom the description 'person' does not fully apply" (Menkiti,1984,p.104). Through this

incorporation, individuals do not live for themselves, rather life and prosperity belong to all and are shared.

In typical African traditional society, an Oath is an important factor in conflict resolution. As such, the result of conflict resolution is always to accommodate all parties involved in the conflict, through genuine collaboration by all, in the search for effective compromise. In doing so, unnecessary competition is avoided, because the ultimate aim of conflict resolution is an amicable settlement by persuasion, mediation, adjudication, reconciliation, arbitration and negotiation not necessarily reverting to the use of force or coercion at all cost, or any cost. From the jurisprudential perspective, African societies have a judicial sense where people are joined to make litigations. Their traditional oath serves as a device for keeping the actions of man under checks and balances and generally, to enhance sanity in the interrelationship between men and the gods. With the advent of Christianity, the practice of the African Traditional Oath is regarded as "barbaric, fetish, uncivilized, and mysterious to a point of terming it a dirty-oath" (Ekong, 2011). While the Annang calls the traditional oath *mmiam*-oath, the Igbo call it *inu iyi*. Other cultures of Afro-society have various names for their traditional oath. In doing this, we shall in this paper, offer two sets of moral arguments to establish that: first, African Traditional Oath has played a vital role towards the sustainability of peace and social order within the parameters of the Afro-Communal setting. Particularly, as the practice is compatible and helps in riding the society of social vices. Secondly, the African Traditional oath is important to a great extent as it enforces oneness and togetherness within the African space.

African Traditional-Oath and Afro-Communitarianism.

An oath in African Traditional conception is defined as a solemn promise made by an individual or group of persons having a deity as a witness to the terms of the agreement within the African society. It can also be seen and regarded as an affirmation of an intended action or deed, binding on an individual with an obligation to be fulfilled. Such promises may either be a verbal formula or a symbolic ritual. According to Waapela (1996), it could be "administered on two individuals or community to promote and strengthen bonds of friendship and foster good human relationship. It binds them mystically, restraining them from hostility towards each other". This kind of oath creates what Mbiti (1969) describes as "blood brothers" in which the parties involved relate as if they were real blood brothers and would not in any way act or behave in a manner that would create hostility between them. The human person, therefore, becomes "the most important and significant entity in the hierarchy of beings as it interprets the activities of

other beings and determines their relationship"(Umotong 2018). Speaking in this wise, Offiong (1991), taking the Annang people as a specimen for Africa, avers that the "African Traditional oath has been in practice since the very beginning of time across the length and breadth of Annang communities; as both a discursive and practical mechanism that has shaped the understanding of everyday life, experiences and enigmatic moments of Annang people". This implies that, throughout time, African Traditional-oath (*mmiam*) has been viewed as a powerful traditional tool for the establishment and re-establishment of order, movements, allegiance and restoration of justice, as well as the promotion of peaceful coexistence with human and communal boundaries.

African Traditional-Oath practice is a practice between man and God and there stand various intermediaries such as deities and ancestors as well as rituals, medicines, and other spirit beings. The deities are especially seen as expressions of God's grace and each of these forces/beings derive their life and power from God to help rule and judge on his behalf, even if they do so in an unpredictable, arbitrary manner. This pantheon of spirit beings within the African Traditional Religion (ATR) cosmology "stands at the centre of ritual oath activity with oath-taking temples and shrines functioning as locations where deities and humans meet" (Iniobong 2019).

The above episode simply shows that long before Africa was colonized, and way beyond the advent of the slave trade, African societies had institutional mechanisms as well as cultural sources to uphold the values of peace, transparency, tolerance, solidarity and respect for, and of, one another. These ethnocentric structures were responsible for peaceful coexistence, confidence-building, peacemaking, peace-building, conflict monitoring, conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution. On this purview, Ele (2017) reacts thus:

The white invaders, the colonial masters, the foreign capitalists and syndicates of apartheid may have introduced Euro-American styles of conflict management mechanisms in Africa, but they could not erase or obliterate the traditional strategies which were applied to preventing conflicts, resolving disputes and promoting peace among African people. This is because, over the centuries, fertile African minds generated and developed social forms, philosophical thoughts, judicial frameworks and processes, cultural patterns and practices that withstood the acculturation influences of imperialism.

If these mechanisms were effective in handling and managing conflicts among the people, it was largely because they reflected the socio-political orientation of the African people, addressing all the social, political and economic conflicts among communal African societies. Thus, it was customary for people to sit down informally to discuss and agree on any pressing issues. To this end, the traditional African judicial system was predicated

on an open and inclusive judicial operation; where every male adult could participate in the decision-making process; against the Western practice of absolute roles by Judges.

On the other hand, Afro-Communitarianism which is the dominant indigenous philosophy in the sub-Saharan region is the view that harmonious communal relationships should be pursued either as ends in themselves or at least as an essential means to some other end such as vitality or well-being (Metz 2007; Gyekye 2011). This implies that mutuality, bonding, togetherness and peaceful coexistence form the central core of Afro-communitarianism, hence their philosophy of "I am because you are; since you are therefore, I am" (Mbiti 1969). From the Afro-communitarian point of view, one's communal relationship with others is the determinant factor by which to judge one's actions and character and one's moral standing in the community. Within the African socio-moral framework, several terms are used to denote the moral centrality of commonality, however the most common is "Ubuntu" which Rodrigues and Metz (2021) translate as humanness, where reference to it signifies that one should live a genuinely humane life by relating communally and harmoniously. Communality, therefore, becomes a fundamental criterion for authentic personhood, and this can only manifest through incorporation (Obioha 2020b). For without incorporation into this or that community, individuals are considered to be danglers to whom the description 'person' does not fully apply" (Menkiti,1984). Incorporation thus builds a sense of belongingness and oneness where one sees the other as his or herself through a social and harmonious communal existence. To this end, Communitarianism as a philosophy is founded on the values of social well-being, solidarity, interdependence, cooperation, care, concern and reciprocal obligations. These values are a sure foundation for human well-being since no single individual is self-sufficient to meet the essentialities of his personality (Obioha & Adegboyega 2020a). This implies that the facticity of human precariousness has made the human person self-insufficient thus, the need for interdependence for authentic living.

For Afro-communitarians, one's indebtedness to his society can only be expressed in two forms i.e "identification with others and goodwill towards them" (Metz 2017). Identification here speaks of the person's interrelatedness with the whole of her being such that the whole of her being depends on the existence of others. Speaking in this wise, Rodrigues and Metz (2021) conceived identities as "a form of a continuum which is dependent on each other, centrally by enjoying a sense of togetherness and participating cooperatively on projects". One's identification, therefore, becomes germane since it is the basis through which an individual's existence is meaningful. To this end therefore, Identification of one's self is not only with one's individual physical and psychological

characteristics but also with Significant others, groups, social categories, material objects and places (Obioha, 2021). On the goodwill, individuals are expected to act or feel in such a way that enhances the well-being and excellence of others.

In other words, actions which promote the well-being of others are actions worth pursuing. Thus, the well-being of others becomes central to our corporate existence. Metz captured this principle thus: "An action is right just insofar as it promotes shared identity among people grounded on good-will; an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to do so and tends to encourage the opposites of division and ill-will" (Metz, 2017). Following this principle, African societies developed some mechanisms to coexist and interrelate with each other. One such mechanism is their institution of traditional oath. This oath was to promote peace and social order in society. To this end, the African traditional oath was to ensure that the society is salvaged from the Hobbesian state of nature where only the mighty could survive and to ensure equality of all men, since no one will be above the consequences of the oath. African traditional oath, therefore, cements peaceful coexistence, confidence-building, peacemaking, peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and conflict resolution which is captured in Afro-communitarianism.

This process is achieved through the institution of various kinds of oaths. For instance, within African Worldview, there is a promissory oath. This kind of oath involves individuals who have gone into an agreement and promised themselves never to break nor betray the terms of their agreement. Members of the vigilante group, local hunters undertake promissory oath to help control the innate tendency of a greedy hunter to shoot at a fellow hunter willfully while claiming he mistook the colleague for a game or animal. Thus, the promissory oath checkmates unfaithfulness and promotes oneness among African traditional societies. This and other kinds of traditional oath such as the family oath, and the community or village oath has helped rid African societies of many ills.

African Traditional-Oath as a Mechanism for Peace and Social Order

Every culture has a way of controlling the social mechanism of the society and Nwolise (2004) affirms that African traditional societies are known to hold secrets of peacemaking and peace-building locked in their culture formed from customs and norms before the coming of the colonial masters disrupted them. Even with modernization, these traditional institutions still subsist in keeping the heart of the society in harmony. To this end, the African traditional oath is one of the instruments for societal control. As it is a means through which people adhere to social norms and are devoid of any form of social vices. Ekarika (2014) shades more light on this when he avers that: "*mmiam*-oath was and has continued to be one of those potent and important means of curbing wrongdoing and detecting crimes as well as punishing culprits in society whether in the areas of the

underworld practices such as arm robbery, kidnapping, witchcraft, culture murders, adulterers/ fornicators, etc. The mere mention of *mmiam-oath* sends shivers into the spines of these evil practitioners". This implies that within African traditional society, the practice served as a watchdog to the inhabitants of the society. This is because every action of the people is so ordered to avoid being summoned before the great deity.

African traditional society is rooted in this belief system, making use of a traditional oath to sustain her societal norms such that none dare to go contrary to the social norms without being summoned before the oath. Traditional oaths, therefore, have their source in some tragic social event, and the desire to prevent such a tragedy from recurring makes African traditional oath one of the most important supports of the social system in African worldview as it makes enforceable the rules of social intercourse. To this end, the traditional-oath serves as one of the traditional structures of conflict management and crime control in African traditional society. This social control could be seen in areas such as a land disputes, armed robbery or stealing, marriage infidelity etc.

As captured by Inyang, the land dispute can cause intra or inter-family crises and to avoid this, certain traditional measures are often put in place for peaceful settlement when the need arises. Most of these measures employed could be human or supernatural measures (Inyang 2002). African society whose physical world is closely knitted with the metaphysical world enjoins both measures for societal control and conflict management. This attests to the Annang popular assertions that "*awasi eyong mme awasi isong ediana ked ekpeme idung*" meaning the gods of the sky and the gods of the earth work together to protect the land". To this end, the traditional-oath is one of the traditional measures employed to ensure the peaceful settlement of land disputes among the Annang people of South-South Nigeria. To further buttress this view Akuku Akpan Udo Adiaha of the Adiasim clan in Essien Udim in an oral interview opines thus:

Land dispute is an inevitable problem among the Annang people...people of the same lineage, family or parents often fall into land dispute...and the easiest way to resolve a such dispute where truth cannot be known easily is through the application of *Mmiam*. One party who claims to be the owner of the land in dispute must swear on *mmiam*, after which a period of one year would be given. During this period, an injunction is placed on the said land till *mmiam* vindicates the person as the rightful owner of the land.

A recourse to *mmiam* in land disputes among the Annang is because it is believed that where the truth is uncertain the best is to consult the supernatural whose truth cannot be hidden.

This means it promotes peace, harmony and togetherness since no one will want to encroach on another person's land to avoid the consequences of the gods. It is in this wise that the Africans conceived their traditional oath as the gods of justice and their recourse to it is knitted in their belief that where the truth is uncertain the best is to consult the supernatural whose truth cannot be hidden.

The traditional African society condemns the modern means of using security operatives to combat robbery as a waste of funds, as such and most often ends in futility without achieving the expected result. It is in this wise that Ekponne in his unpublished work avers that "an armed robber can escape the bullet of the police force but will never escape from the invisible bullet of the supernatural force enchant against him". Supporting this claim Mezie-Okeye (2016) quoted Nwolise (2004) that:

Each people, race, or identity group in the world had (and has) their ways of doing things especially as it concerns social control and conflict resolution. While in Europe for instance, the police are a means of crime detection, several African societies relied on oath-taking, divination and blood covenant in pre-colonial times. Traditional methods of resolving conflict were geared towards restoring peace and not necessarily punishing the offenders.

This implies that a recourse to the traditional method of controlling crime pays far better than the modern method. An instance of this is reported by Ekarika (2014) about the untold treatments that befell Edo state.

Between 2010 and 2011, many cases of armed robbery and kidnapping were recorded in Edo State such that life became almost impossible for the citizens. The governments were crippled, and the security outfits could not match the evil machinations and menace of these men and women of the underworld. Accordingly, the Oba of Benin his Royal Majesty, Oba Erediauwa UK Akpolokpolo with his traditional chiefs and other traditional rulers in the council decided that the only thing that needed to be done is to take recourse to the ancestors and supernatural agencies. Thus, they invited the custodian of mmiam-oath from Ika Annang. At the dawn of it, there were many recorded mishaps and unavailable deaths and other in explaining calamities within Edo state with the result that kidnapping and armed Robert took the backstage in Edo land.

The above narration shows the potency of African traditional oaths in curbing societal vices. Traditional oath is the god of the land that watches every human action. Defaulters of the ordinances of it (oath) are bound to face the consequences. Wherever there is an institution of the oath, there is bound to be safety and security of lives and properties according to the African traditional belief.

Another social vice which traditional oath helps to control in African society is adultery. Adultery as cited in Marriage Customs (2011), is an act of having sexual relations with a person other than an officially recognized spouse. According to Dada (2013), "adultery is a serious and capital offend in many societies and some societies have developed cruel punishment for the offend ranging from death to humiliation". The implication of this is that within the parameters of African Traditional Religion, adultery is socially and religiously prohibited. As a way of checkmating these vices, the Annang people of Africa instituted *mmiam-ekponka-agwo*. *Ekponka agwo* is a deity in Annang land that punishes women who commit extramarital affairs. This practice accordingly is the Annang ancestral spirit or ghosts of adultery, whose duty is to regulate, check, expose and punish infidelity among the Annang. A spouse who commits adultery inflicts some punishment upon self and sometimes might lead to death if they fail to confess to the spouse's family. In most cases, in Annang society, the ghost spirit or deity may kill the husband if the husband should eat anything from the wife who commits adultery without rendering to the ancestors their due sacrifices to appease them. It is in this wise that some families within the Annang society decide to subject their wives to the swearing of promiscuity oath to the husband and the entire family to remain faithful to the husband and never to compromise her body with any other man. To this end, Annang married women are extra careful as the truth cannot be hidden in the eyes of the gods. Truth unfolds itself whenever *mmiam-oath* is at stake. Justice is done to all and sundry as *mmiam-oath* is a respecter of no man.

To a great extent, this parameter has aided in checkmating marriage infidelity in traditional Afro-Communal societies against the western world. Lamenting on the decline in marital covenant, Ajode (2012) calls for the reinstatement of the old African methods of societal control... especially in the area of marriage, as marital infidelity has become the order of the day in the present society. According to him, the influence of westernization has cut across all fabrics of African society.... divorcement was not as common as it is today as marriages were seen as a union and not a contract in traditional African society.

In Igbo traditional society, various traditional mechanisms are used to foster peace and social order in the society. Such mechanisms are oath-taking (*inu iyi*) and covenant-making (*igba ndu*). These mechanisms according to Ele (2017) were the mechanisms for conflict resolution in pre-colonial Igbo Society and were embedded in the tradition and culture of the people. He further asserts that "Conflict resolution has its religious dimension in Igbo land as the supernatural, priests (*Eze muo, Attama ma*) the ancestors,

shrines, the deities and the Supreme Being are invoked as witnesses to *inu iyi* and *Igba ndu* among *Ndi Igbo* (Igbo people)". In Igbo traditional society, traditional oath-taking (*inu iyi*) derives its potency from its unique natural features and the belief system accompanying them. These as outlined by Ele (2007) include one: There is this strong belief in its prompt or immediate mystical or religious sanctions on anyone who swears the oath falsely. At this point, all the spirits; deities, shrines or ancestors whose presence the oath was taken and invoked during the oath-taking would afflict the defaulters with untold infirmities or death. Two, the Community interventions whereby the accused and complainant are advised to swear an oath as a credible way of settling their conflicts and calming their troubled emotions and frayed nerves. The community recommends oath-taking for disputants and upholds its value as an excellent technique for settling conflicts. Three, the use of emblems that command spiritual appeals in the understanding of the people. The deities or shrines mentioned earlier for example, are taken to be powerful, dreadful and useful but all the same, in settling confrontations of social powers. The agents of the deity would bring the shrine or its emblem to the village for the people concerned as an option or the people in dispute with their witnesses and official representatives of the village would go to the shrine where they would swear the oath (Ele 2017). The implication of this is that whoever knows that he does not have a right standing or is guilty in heart would not want to go near nor swear the oath in deceit to avoid the consequences that follow, as oaths administered in Igbo tradition were regarded as legally binding on the people involved. Thus, a refrain from taking the oath brings automatic peace and orderliness into the system.

For the Tiv people of the Middle Belt in Nigeria, *Swem* is the traditional mechanism for social order. This traditional god of justice according to Bohannan (1958) is known to have two meanings among the Tiv people. On one hand, *swem* is known as a place where the entire Tiv people originated and on the other hand, *Swem* is great, fetish itself anti-*tsav* and also kills *mbatsav*. *Swem*, therefore, is a traditional oath of the Tiv people with magical forces that is responsible for the settlement of disputes and the provision of justice. The institution of *Swem* aid in the social functioning of the Tiv society as "every Tiv person got the justice they deserved from it. This understanding kept the whole Tiv in unity, having one voice, love, courage, and hope" (Lorundu and Jiki, 2019). *Swem* oath, therefore, serves as a mechanism for uniting the people, and also a means of guiding against social vices that are injurious to society. Such crimes as murder, adultery, incest or suicide, and also invited calamities in the land if appeasements were not made urgently. Other crimes were considered social disturbances (*kwagh-dzaniyol*) and included acts such as rape, theft and arson (Nomishan, 2021).

The Yoruba traditional mechanism for the maintenance of peace varies as several instruments are used as a symbol for an oath in their cultural praxis. Olaoba (2021) list these emblems to include *edun ara* (thunder stone), *ada* (cutlass) and *Ogun* (the god of iron). These emblems are believed to have a metaphysical backup, thus making oath-taking herculean in Yoruba traditional society as it is in other Sub-Saharan African societies. Oath-taking is a tool for ensuring social order in Yoruba traditional society especially when there are misdeeds on the part of those saddled with the responsibilities of protecting the commonwealth of the society (Oladipupo, 2021). In an attempt to curb the social misdemeanour, the Yorubas institute traditional oaths in order to ensure peace and tranquillity in their society. Oath-taking thus forms part of their socio-cultural heritage.

Toward Preserving African Traditional Oath for Afro-Communal Posterity

Preserving African traditional values is worth challenging in the postmodern era where indigenous cultures and values are rapidly and radically eroding. The destructive effect of westernization has affected African values to a point of diminishing. This negative effect is seeable as most African cultures and values have been replaced with western cultures (Obioha, 2010). It grows worst when certain African cultural values which form an integral part of African society have been termed barbaric and fetish, especially at the arrival of Christianity. Drawing our attention back to African cultures and countering the erroneous claim, Nwakoby (2017) opines that "African culture is not demonic as the early missionaries to Africa made us believe at the dawn of Christianity; as they aimed to rob us of our belief system and to impose their strange religion on us...moreover, African culture and belief is unique as every part of it is important to Afro-humanism". The import of Nwakoby's position shows the importance of African culture to the African worldview. One such cultural practice is the African traditional oath, which westernization has fought hard to cripple and make unattractive.

African Traditional oath as part of African traditional belief should be upheld and sustained as the practice is important within the African space having aided critically in curbing many social vices, especially at the dawn of independence. It is on this wise that Lawrence-Hart (2018) cries for the moral decadence of the post-independence Afro-society. According to her, "before the era of colonialism, morality was a cherished integrity because the good name was better than money...and people do not necessarily need to swear or take an oath to live in conformity to the norms of the society, but at the dawn of independence, oath taking was not only part of traditional society but has become

legal and a common feature in the court of law". Her position implies that traditional African society was knitted by the oath that the English law court did not recognize.

Also, the African traditional oath is important to the Afro-worldview in that, the practice provides social functions among the people. The people remained loyal and accountable to societal norms. Certain norms in African society come with the invocation of an oath against anyone who will go contrary to the norms of the land. Thus, members of African society adhere strictly to the social orders of the land. In this wise, Ekarika (2014) avers that "among the people of Ibibio, Annang and Efik, the fear of *Mbiam* is the beginning of wisdom among adults and children whether as indigenes or aliens wherever it holds sways". This implies that a mere mention of *Miami-oath* instils a sense of orderliness among the people, as no one would want to bear the consequences. Given these achievements, there is a need to sustain the practice of traditional oath-taking within the African space.

According to Chukwu (2012), One's action is considered moral or immoral depending on how that very action enhances or impedes the welfare of others and the smooth functioning of the community. The concern of Ndigbo (Africa) is not how good or bad an act appears to the individual but how the community evaluates it. Consequently, the preservation of the community is a *sine qua non* and an onus of every member of the community. Therefore, every effort must be directed to the preservation, maintenance, growth and perpetuation of this common treasure. The pitiless elimination of everything which hinders this end, and the encouragement at all costs of everything which furthers it, is one major objective of African traditional oath practice.

Furthermore, the inevitability of conflict whenever two or more people come together for a specific purpose calls for the need for traditional oaths in Afro society. That communal coexistence defines African people does not exempt the people from conflict, not even in ancient times. This is noted as the African traditional society has reportedly been engaged in a series of inter-communal wars or conflicts. However, amidst this conflict, the people had their ways of controlling and managing their conflict whenever it occurred. One such means was the institution of the African traditional oath, where parties involved would come to terms and covenant with themselves to be at peace with each other. Since Afro-communal societies cannot or would not eliminate conflict from the society in as much as their dealings with their fellow humans will continue. There is, therefore, a need to preserve African traditional oaths for the future generation.

Moreso, the inalienable animal nature in man makes it necessary for traditional oath practice. Aristotle was undoubtedly right when he conceived man as a political animal. This conception is definitive of human nature in so many ways. As a political animal, the

human person is full of subtlety, authoritarian, autocratic and even egoistic. These innate human natures stand parallel to oneness, togetherness, and interrelatedness which is the doctrine of Afro-communality in that, these animalistic natures breed individualism, and selfishness and in the long run cause chaotic upheavals in human society. To surmount this seeming unsurmountable facticity of human nature in the present and the future, the African traditional oath needs to be sustained and preserved in a more oriented form for the betterment of African society as this will help foster peace and social order within the African space.

Finally, the African traditional oath prevents unfaithfulness in human relations and at the same time builds trust as a valuable social capital in society. A covenant made in form of oath-taking, either in front of divinity or religious emblems makes African people comport themselves well in society. Oath, therefore, gives meaning and cohesion to society and enhances the sense of seeking the good of others and the community in its totality. This being the case, for the peace and social order that was and is still enjoyed in African society to be transferred to the future generation, there is a need for the sustenance of the African traditional oath.

A critical submission

The potency of the African traditional oath for peaceful co-existence cannot be over-emphasized as the practice stands unchallengeable to any other system and the violation of its tenets always results in severe consequences. Whereas the modern justice system of the post-colonial society is perceived as an alien system, as the outcome fails to appeal to the ordinary people because it excludes the people from participation, and by application creates divisions and promotes individualism, the African traditional oath is inclusive and enhances relational ties among its participants.

More so, the enhancement of the consciousness for harmonious living by African traditional oath is of immense importance as Africans realize that they can only fulfil their destiny when they live and act harmoniously in the community. This complementary interrelatedness that characterizes the ontology of African beingness and commonality makes it obvious that one is seen in others and others in one.

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