

ISSN 0030 5596

Christianity

Islam



Orita

Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies

African Traditional Religion

IBADAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

XLI/1 June 2009

ORITA

Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies

XLI/1

June 2009

This edition of *ORITA* is published
in honour of

Prof. Samuel Oyinloye Abogunrin (FNAL)

Retired Professor of New Testament
Department of Religious Studies
University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

Published by

The Department of Religious Studies,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Produced by **JOHN ARCHERS** (Publishers) Ltd

GPO Box 339, Dugbe, Ibadan

☎ 0805 833 6156, 0803 4476 916

e-mail: johnarchers@yahoo.co.uk

Orita is indexed in the following *Index Services*:

- Ulrich's Int. Periodicals Directory (Index Services) www.bowker.org.uk
R.R. Bowker, Box 727, New Providence NJ 07974-0727 USA
- Zeller Verlag www.tandf.co.uk/journals/journal (Social Science Citation Index)
Postfach 1949, D-49009 OSNABRUCK.
- Periodica Islamica, journalseek.net/cgi-bin/journalseek/journalsearch
22 Jalan Liku, 5900 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

ORITA

Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies

XXXX 1

December 2009

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Page</i>
Prof. C.U. Manus	<i>Articles</i> "Despite The Ubiquitous Holy Noises": Can There Still be Relevance in Mainstreaming Religious Studies in the Curriculum of the Nigerian Universities?	1
Philomena, Mwaura and Elishiba Kimani	Gender Based Violence: A Pastoral Challenge for the Church in Africa	25
Akintunde Dorcas Olubanke	Decolonizing Biblical Studies in Nigeria: Women Perspective	43
Oguntoyinbo-Ateere, M.I.	The Magnificat as a Pathfinder for the Nigerian Poor Women	69
Dairo Olalekan A.	'Born Again' Christian Sceptics and Political Democratic Progress in Nigeria: Giving Caesar His Dues	83
Toryough G.N.	Women in First-Century Greco-Roman and Hebrew Cultures as Background to Understanding Paul in I Timothy 2:11-14 and I Corinthians 14:33-36	95
Oderinde Tundun	The Power That Sets Free: An Analysis of Mark 5:25-34 With Reference to The Essence of Christianity	113
Berekiah O.	An Exegetical Analysis of the Role of the wheko ("kohen" - Priest) in Malachi 2:7 in the Perspective of Religious Pedagogy in Contemporary Nigeria	127

Okanlawon, Samuel O.	Hermeneutical Implications of Lucan View of Jesus the Saviour for the Church in Africa	139
Oyeronke Olademo	Women, Pentecostalism, and Public Life in Nigeria	151
Ayantayo, J.K.	Imperativeness of Professional Ethics in Religious Studies Scholarship in Nigeria	165
Fatokun S.A.	Church Organisation and Administration in the Early Christian Era and Its Implications for the Contemporary Church in Nigeria	179
Mepaiyeda S.M.	A Brief Survey of the Emergence and Impact of the Anglican Church in Kogi and Kwara States (1854 – 1999)	197
Oshibanjo M.O.	Preaching the Gospel and Ministerial Pitfalls: An Ethical Evaluation	223
Omotoye Rotimi	Church History	233
Fashina, N.O.	A Literary and Philosophical Investigation of Ori as an Epistemology of African Yoruba Theory of Being	243
Akintoye Goke	By Dreams: The Evidence from the Ancient Greeks	267
Gill Oluwatosin Adekannbi	A Critique of Irrational Elements in African Beliefs	277

A Critique of Irrational Elements in African Beliefs

Gill Oluwatosin Adekannbi

Abstract

Various researches show that irrational elements in human beliefs, otherwise known as superstition, just as they were criticised in ancient Greek and Roman societies, have been challenged in Europe and America as well. This paper highlights how individuals and organizations in Africa have similarly raised their voices against the increasing controversial stories of claims of supernatural influences or interferences in human affairs, suppression of thoughts, sexual abuse and extra-judicial inflicting of punishment or killing by individuals professing authority from spiritual realm.

After a brief consideration of the socio-religious atmosphere that engenders the romance with the supernatural sphere, this work shows how the prevalent recourse to mystery in providing reasons for extraordinary occurrences could be most subjective. It then relates how what may seem a private expression of socio-cultural or religious views is confronted with criticism when it infests the public domain with disquieting concerns. The paper illustrates how practices rooted in superstition are perceived as growing threats to people's welfare in the continent. When the subject is understood in these terms, more meaning could be added to the search for a solution to sporadic religious, political and social conflicts in Africa.

Introduction

On Saturday, January 10, 2004, millions of people in the West African nation of Benin marked the annual voodoo festival, during which different

traditional cults held prayers, poured libations and made sacrifices to their dead ancestors. The festival attracted travellers from as far as Haiti, the United States of America and Europe. While Benin is renowned as a principal centre of voodoo and other mystic practices, belief in supernatural forces pervades the culture of most African societies. Against this background, a broadcaster of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in an Africa Live programme, apparently with reference to Africans, asked a pointed question that may sound rather judgmental: 'Why are we so superstitious?'¹ Prejudicial as the above question may appear, history hardly makes superstition an African stereotype; universally, man's interpretation of events and his experiences as he seeks meaning in life may be subjective. Just as the Greeks, the Romans and people of other cultures of the world, have their history of superstition-the fear of the unknown or the supernatural forces, so do Africans. This work is an examination of the notion of superstition vis-a-vis some developments in Africa.

A Background to Superstition in Africa

In West Africa, men and women who claim supernatural power are commonplace and the tendency to turn to these to forestall or cure diseases, protect individuals and society against dangers, is allegedly prevalent among those who are prone to attribute human misfortune to unseen powers. There have been claims to the ability to prevent rain and perform similar extraordinary feats. Many controversies are generated by the activities of such men who profess having hidden supernatural power even when their remedies and preparations are still lacking empirical basis. Yet, purportedly, 'positive results are known to have been achieved through their practices'.²

It must be noted that the word superstition is alien to the African vocabulary. There is no concept of excess in the practice of divination or irrationality in turning to divination before making daily decisions. This

¹ BBC NEWS Africa, 'Do Superstition Influence Your Life?' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/Africa> (accessed October 15, 2006)

² Awolalu, J.O. and Dopamu, A. *West Africa Traditional Religion*. Ibadan: Onibon Oje Press, 1979,146

informs the background to the saying among the Yoruba: '*Bi oni ti ri, ola ki ri bee; eyiyii lo mu ki Babalawo maa difa ororun*' (Because each day has his own peculiar problem, the Babalawo (*Ifa* priest) has to cast *Ifa* (divine) every fifth day. Similarly, it is believed that just as a blacksmith is called upon to sharpen machetes for farmers every morning, an *Ifa* priest must consult the Oracle.³ Making sacrifices is also a fundamental part of the Africa belief system. This is seen as a means of contact or communion between man and a divine being and as a basis for currying the favour of the unseen powers.⁴ Making a sacrifice is seen as the answer to virtually every problem since divination often ends with the prescription of a sacrifice.⁵ This, as it applies to divination, may just be viewed as an aspect of religion. The common belief is that there are mysterious powers in the universe governing human activities and these powers could be utilised with the use of incantations, charms, sorcery, magic and witchcraft.⁶

However, the assumption that these approaches and similar ones can readily be used to provide rational explanation for natural phenomena, mysteries or misfortunes, even when morally acceptable warnings and instructions are ignored appears as another issue that merits consideration under the heading of superstition. The tendency to timidly attribute puzzling experiences to the supernatural has engendered a widespread belief in witches or evil forces as the cause of virtually all mishaps. Witchcraft has been viewed as the 'African way of projecting a philosophy of life, an attempt to explain the problem of failure, sorrow, pain or death.'⁷ The background to this is shown by the following quotation that well fits into the Yoruba cosmology:

When the Witches and the Human Beings were coming from heaven to earth, each group was asked what his purpose was in going to earth. The Witches said their own purpose was the

³ Awolalu, J.O. *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*. London: Longman, 1979,121

⁴ Idowu, E.B. *Olodumare, God in the Yoruba Belief*. London: Longman, 1962,119

⁵ Awolalu, *op. cit.* p.126

⁶ *Ibid.* 92

⁷ Awolalu, *op. cit.* 88

destruction of all the things done by Human Beings...⁸

Superstition may be particularly striking when explanations that are more rational are provided for what hitherto had been naturally attributed to the activity of witches. When sometimes an individual living in an urban area is afraid of going to his village for fear of being killed by witches and voodoo, the negative effect of imbibing a thought that suggests that every neighbour is a potential witch is glaring, and could pass for an exaggerated notion of the activities of witches. The traditional Yoruba society was simply not an irrational one that had no concept of man's personal responsibility for his action. *Ìwà loba àwúre* (character is superior to a medicine for good fortune), a well-known Yoruba expression illustrates how both a supernatural agent and an individual can share the responsibility. When this is not recognised, so that a person is quick to blame unseen forces for his misfortunes, or worse still, trembles out of fear of the unknown, a situation that is parallel to what was identified in the Classical time as superstition becomes observable. Reasonably, one can expect that Africans would contend against the view that this simply represents their religions.

A Trend that Disturbs Public Peace

As noted earlier, belief in mysterious powers in Africa is apparent in various ways. Witchcraft, an element of such belief in mystical power, although not confined to the continent, is very prevalent in Africa. Among the Yoruba, for example, witchcraft continues to be an explanation for human misfortunes. Family problems, economic setbacks or business failure, unemployment, health issues, sudden death and other life problems are still attributed to witches. The endemic atmosphere of suspicion that this has produced is illustrated by a Yoruba saying:

<i>Àje ké lánàà</i>	The witch-bird chirped last night;
<i>Omo kú lonii</i>	And the child dies today;
<i>Ta niò sàì mò pé</i>	Who does not know that

⁸ Abimbola, W. Ifa, *An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus*. London: Oxford University Press, 1976, 165

Àje ànà lo pa omo je It was the chirping witch of the previous night that has killed the child?⁹

Since the boundary between what may be termed a natural cause and what the witches are culpable of is often blurred, if not practically non-existent, the belief is the root of irrationality that is expressed thus:

Sometimes, the inability to assess situations correctly leads to attributing failure to witchcraft. A man eats unripe fruit and develop acute belly ache to witchcrafts... Likewise, a man who lacks academic ability beyond high school level, but who desires to get into a university, may blame his failure to gain admission on witchcraft rather on his natural limitations.¹⁰

Perhaps, in an attempt to accomplish a seemingly impossible feat of discouraging the threat to public peace, journalists in Ghana were cautioned against perpetuating superstition through intellectual laziness manifest in lack of a questioning, critical response to supernatural interpretation of events that affect Ghana and Africa at large. Ghanaian journalists have been accused of inhibiting the Ghanaian development process by taking undue advantage of what appears to be Ghanaians deep-seated superstition, which relates to belief in witchcraft and supposed prophetic revelations, deterring people from finding rational or reasonable solutions to their problems.¹¹

What happened in June 2001, when villagers of Congo's northeast provinces began a bloody so-called witch eradication campaign, sparing neither neighbour nor friend could also be seen as a damaging effect of superstition. Allegedly, witches were callously hacked apart by machete-wielding vigilantes – indeed, a scene of carnage that is only reminiscent of the Rwanda crisis. It is difficult to accept that in this age, the tribal healers, who 'smelled out' victims (identified witches) before they were savagely beaten to the point of making incriminatory confessions about

⁹ Awolalu, *op. cit.* p.87-88

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Akosah-Sarpong K, 'When Superstition and Journalism Collide'. GhanaWeb. <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/artikel.php?ID=90806> (accessed July 10 2006)

others alleged involvement, could be excused of the crime of inhuman termination of innocent lives throughout the rural areas. Three hundred villagers were killed in the first days of the witch obsession and the death toll subsequently rose to nearly eight hundred.¹² The gory picture of the havocs wrecked by the superstitious practice is further seen as hundreds of Congolese fled, with many bearing machete wounds on their legs and arms, to the relative safety of Uganda. Another vicious and illegal method of executing witches in Central Africa is burying the accused alive.¹³ Those with the power could accuse their of witchcraft and execute them with impunity.

There are Yoruba Radio and Television programmes, as well as films and Literature in Nigeria that extensively dwell on supernatural themes when accounting for strange human experiences and mishaps. While the existence of supernatural forces and their influences is not disputed in this work, creating an atmosphere that seems to prevent making efforts at providing alternative explanations to events, but encouraging an immediate recourse to use of mystery to account for misfortune evokes the thought of superstition. When with indulgence individuals tell or listen to such stories, they do not necessarily feel secure or less fearful; rather, the effects produced in them may be identifiable with those produced in the caricature superstitious character of the ancient philosopher, Theophrastus, who would dread even his own shadow.

Use of any substance or substances constitutes African medicine, which are employed in treating on preventing disease or illness and other causes of concern. While individuals may possess indigenous knowledge of herbs or leaves with medicinal powers, African traditional medicine often has its metaphysical side and requires the service of diviners, who functions as a priest and a producer of charms. Since supernatural powers are usually perceived as responsible for the success or failure of any medication, African medicine goes beyond the use of substances with proven therapeutic value to emphasise the role of the diviner. Hence, a medicine-man must be able to employ magical words along with his

¹² Richard P. *The Witch Killer of Africa*. <http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/richard> (accessed February 03, 2004)

¹³ *Ibid.*

preparation, either appeasing or resisting evil forces in order to procure a remedy. In view of the power attributed to them and their preparations, medicine-men are authorities whose prescribed taboo-instructions on curing disease or other causes of life anxieties have the force of a law. The position of these agents of African traditional healers, to say the least though, has come under review.

In a development that may be understood as an attempt to separate superstition from tradition or cultural legacy in 2002, the South African Traditional Healers Organization released a statement at its headquarters in Durban, South Africa. The release strongly condemns the belief that having sexual intercourse with a virgin girl cures AIDS, disassociating the healers from the prescription of such treatment to HIV positive patients. The association categorically denounced this not only as superstition, but also as a dangerous practice. Admitting that they have no cure for AIDS in their herbal medicines, the healers attribute the obnoxious prescription by some healers, supposedly desperately to assist dying patients, as rooted in popular superstitions.¹⁴ While these diviners and traditional healers through their governing organization came out to take a stand against the belief, the fact that some healers could imagine endorsing sleeping with a virgin as cure for HIV and AIDS, illustrates the far-reaching effect of superstition. This is a reflection of superstitious incline in a society, a propensity of knowing no limit to trusting the supernatural power claim of traditional healers and of total neglect of rationality.

In the Yoruba belief system, magic and religion are hardly separable. Concerning the use of magic, the following observation is made:

As we have good magical preparation so also evil magic...
By the use of enchanted rings, men have rendered blind;
charmed with alligator pepper has been used to bring incurable
diseases on victims of circumstances...¹⁵

Showing that this is no mere traditional heritage is a recent report of the effect of this West African tribe belief in Southern Africa. The Southern

¹⁴ Hall J., 'Culture-Africa: Attempts Made to Outlaw Dangerous Superstition'. Inter Press Service Haggard.<http://www.aegis.org/news/ips/> (accessed March 1, 2002)

¹⁵ Awolalu, *op. cit.* p. 77

Africa Development Community (SADC) has struggled with a Nigerian syndicate that exploits the belief in a scheme of turning to the supernatural world to get rich overnight. The prime target of this scheme usually are the poor who easily fall prey to the syndicate that employs fake traditional healers purportedly to help gullible and superstitious ones 'communicate' with their dead ancestors¹⁶ who allegedly have chosen their living relations for an investment opportunity. Each year, South African police pursue cases of dead bodies mutilated for what is believed to be the harvesting of body parts for magic potions or ritual. The press compound the situation by carrying the sensational stories that all centre on the exaggerated idea or a wrong perception of what the traditional healers who are accorded respect in both rural and urban communities are capable of doing or should do.¹⁷ The allegation of Nigerians leaving West Africa to promote superstitious activities in South Africa is reconcilable with many reported cases of individuals who were kidnapped, killed, or had their bodies mutilated by ritual makers in the country.

In 1996, the Nigerian police at Owerri discovered a syndicate that specialized in ritual killing and the sale and procurement of human parts in a hotel owned by one Chief Vincent Duru, popularly known as Otokoto. Although this appeared mystifying to many Nigerians, it was a miniature representation of the notorious practice in a society where many beliefs could be informed by unreasonable and subjective magical thinking. In Nigeria, the subjective view that ghosts and witches are all around helping or harming; the use of juju and charms, are widespread and pervasive.¹⁸ Hence, the belief is not strange in Nigeria that magical portions prepared with human heads, breasts, tongues, eyes, and sexual organs can increase chances of political and financial success. Use of charms and amulets as a form of protection against business failures, sickness and diseases, accidents, and spiritual attacks is not a story of the past. These practices are allegedly driven by ignorance, poverty, desperation, gullibility, and

¹⁶ The Yoruba belief that 'heroic men and women who have made useful contributions to life and culture of the people are deified,' and are in position to affect the course of the living. (See Awolalu, *op. cit.* p.33)

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Igwe L. *The Need for Skepticism in Nigeria* vol. 11.3 September 2001. <http://www.csicop.org/sb> (accessed February 03, 2004)

irrationalism. Inordinate thirst for political power or relevance must be added to the list, and no term other than superstition appears more adequate to sum it up.¹⁹ When corpses are found with some vital organs of the body missing, having been 'harvested' for rituals, it is an outcome of irrationality in the belief system. A society that winks at this and similar acts of resorting to the supernatural power to take undue advantage of others or esteem such acts as mere means to an end would identify with the gloom of medieval period.

Although efforts are always made to provide rational basis for African traditional beliefs, yet, some age-old beliefs – a number of which are mentioned above that persist in modern Africa – at least, correspond with beliefs of other cultures in ancient times that were reputed as the root of superstition. Explanations or interpretations, popularly accepted as objective, had been provided and more of such can still be offered, for seemingly mysterious experiences. The door to a better understanding of puzzling situation can only be shut, when rather than suspending judgement in the face of difficulty, superstition is timidly opted for. The interview that follows indicates how attempts have been made to demystify some African experiences that produce superstition.

Providing Explanations for Mysterious Experiences

Random interviews carried out at Akinyele Local government and in parts of the ancient Oyo town, Nigeria, are given attention. They reflect notions similar to what was termed superstition in the Classical time that are found in the Yoruba belief system.

Mr. Agbeniga Yisau argues that the belief in *Abiku* is an evidence of neglect of the past; a time of *oju dudu* (mental blindness), it betrays lack of proper medical care that was prevalent in the traditional society. Before getting married, people could not make any investigation about blood group and so they were bound to give birth to *Abiku*.²⁰ Although evil

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Abiku*, according to the belief in the traditional Yoruba belief system, is a mysterious child from the spirit world that would, despite any efforts made by his parents to keep him alive, die whenever he so desires.

forces existed and still exist, often people easily ignore their faults and eager to accuse wrongly others of their misfortunes. When they have problems, they become desperate and turn to anyone who appears to have special powers for the solution, he further notes.

It is not everybody, however, that is inclined to see *Abiku* issue as a reflection of ignorance of medical science in the past. Mrs. R.A. Olagoke strongly believes that, although they are no longer common, the decrease in the number of *Abiku* is owing to better skills of medicine men who are still being consulted to determine children that are *Abiku*. Mrs. Olufunmilayo Asekunowo, the owner of the Maternity Home and Children Welfare centre in the Local Government area, admits that people still believe in *Abiku*. According to her, without carrying out any medical tests, people sometimes go to herbal medicine men or traditional healers and only resort to hospitals when these fail them. She relates the case of a boy that was brought to her centre with high temperature who needed blood transfusion in the course of treatment. The initial difficulty in finding the veins of the boy made the boy's father to despair and begin to call the boy an *Abiku*, telling a story of how 'the boy had put a similar resistance when he came before'. He claimed that 'the resistance of the boy resulted in the boy's hand swelling up, when blood would not enter into his veins, leading to his eventual death'.

On investigation, the owner discovered that the parent of the boy had kept him at home for a long time on herbal self-medication, and what was understood as the boy's resistance to blood transfusion was in reality a medical complication or a faulty administration of blood. After successfully treating the boy, Mrs. Asekunowo says she saw the need to enlighten the parents on proper hygiene and diets. Regrettably, she adds, 'superstition still flourishes in environments with poor enlightenment or education'. She laments over people living in unhygienic environments surrounded by open gutters and infested by mosquitoes; caring little about the source of their drinking water, yet quick to conclude the causes of their health problems are mysterious.

As earlier noted, in a society steeped in superstition, the spells of witches often are blamed for stubborn illnesses, crop failure or the inability to give birth to a son. Superstition and faith in witchcraft often have been

a ploy for unreasonable cruel violence against women. While witches exist and are capable of causing havocs, the tendency to attribute quickly societal misfortunes to them may be most unsafe for the society. Mr. Michael Folaranmi, an Agricultural officer at Akinyele Local government of Oyo State, Nigeria, cited an instance of unnecessarily killing of innocent people that happened at his village, when more than ten people, having been accused of being witches were killed. He was strongly not convinced that the people killed were really witches. Although not doubting the existence of witches, Mr. Salawu Aminu shares this opinion and says that the witches should not be seen as the cause of most of the problems attributed to them. To him, '*afowo fa lo poju*' (they are mostly caused by individuals) Suggesting what is nothing other than a superstitious tendency, he notes that some people while leaving necessary things undone are quick to attribute their misfortunes to evil forces.

Mr. Abiola Olawale explains why people easily find explanation for any experience in mysterious powers. To him it is natural for someone who is desperate to have a solution to a persistently plaguing problem to turn to whoever offers it, not as a matter of believing in or doing what is right, but simply because it seems expedient. When it appears effective for an individual, then others tend to see it as the rule and care less about what underlies the matter. Mr. Abiola admits, however, that with tendency to always turn anywhere special powers are claimed to be found for a solution, people easily become victims of pretenders who are adroit at feigning contact with the spirit world.

Another respondent, Mrs. Salawu Ayobami, believes that it is hard to conclude that there are no mysterious experiences in the contemporary, noting that some occurrences still beat human imagination. She agrees that some who give birth to twins are still told by medicine men or by individuals claiming possession of special powers that, simply because they are viewed as unusual children, the twins supposedly possess the wisdom to determine the job career of their parents, particularly, their mother's. With confidence, though, she argues that science has done enough to provide a better understanding of why humans give birth to twins, triplets and quadruplets, so much that occurrence of these should ordinarily not make any one incline to divination. She adds that such

superstitious tendency has constituted a terrible social ill of some women begging for alms in streets under the facade that their innocent babies so desire. If these are not seen as public nuisance, at least, she believes they do not help the economy by unnecessarily depending on the working citizens who generally live on meagre incomes; this is sheer laziness that the society sadly winks at, she reasons.

When automobile accidents occur frequently at a particular spot or generally on roads, a superstitious tendency which may simply lead to the conclusion that some mysterious powers are responsible is reflected by the expression that is still used by some Yoruba today: *ebi n pa ona* (the road is hungry). Some even relate stories of unseen forces particularly claiming human lives in automobile accidents when a calendar year is ending, in the months ending in '-ber'. Mr. Ibrahim Sulaimon, however, contends that possible mechanical faults must be clearly ruled out and it should be certain that roads are properly constructed and maintained before any consideration is given to the thought of holding any unseen power responsible for the misfortunes.

While acknowledging the current use of the expression, *ebi n pa ona* (the road is hungry), Mr. Sulaimon reasons that the role of the unseen powers is most obscure as long as the roads are in bad conditions and drivers drive recklessly after abusing alcohol. Foremost attention, he argues, should be given to discovering and handling obvious causes of tragedy before ever thinking of any external influence.

Honourable Olagoke Suraju, the majority leader of the Local government legislative council mentions *amuwa Olorun* (divine cause), *kadara* (destiny) *emi aiiri* (unseen spirits) and *afowofa* (human cause) as accountable for human misfortunes. However, agreeing with Mr Sulaimon, he stresses that *afowofa* (human cause) is mostly responsible for human mishaps. Noting that people are often negligent of their responsibility, he draws attention to a notorious spot of automobile accident, *Odo-ona* river road in the Local government area. People, according to him, claim that the river is 'drinking blood'. Admittedly, nonetheless, he points out that any reckless driver or even any careful driver that is unfamiliar with the visibly bad spot could easily become a victim at night. He adds that people are prone to finding external excuses for their

mishaps, while they ignore what evidently could have reasonably been done to avert these.

Conclusion

The situations that are discussed in this work may be considered as advocating the need to make a more painstaking effort to handle evident human causes of problems, or when possible, seeking a better understanding of situations according to verifiable laws. Both in the Classical and African belief systems, the gods or supernatural forces are perceived as abounding everywhere, when they are not friendly, they could be seen as indifferent or hostile. The incessant prayers and sacrifices that are offered, the omens and festivals that are constantly observed, the oracles that are consulted as road maps, arguably, are hardly effective when the world is ever seen as dangerous and threatening in the absence of any justification. All the more so when, rather than making practical attempts to address problems, various objects and gestures are readily endowed with magical and mysterious powers.

The situation that is consequent upon this may be compared with that of a small child who would not part with his pet toy even when going to sleep; a neurotic anxiety that leads to abject reliance on amulets, charms and other magical arts in facing life's problems. Using mystery to provide a reason could be most subjective. Even when not deliberately selfishly employed, experiences in Africa show that the approach tends to mislead and subject the mind to every imaginable terror. Interestingly, while science continues its investigations and remains open to review and criticism, in cognisance of the controversy surrounding it, superstition, though, seems to have reached the limit of its quest; if at all the search ever existed. It usually hides under religion, customs or tradition and tends to foreclose change since it has attained a psychological state that is most conducive to all forms of apprehension. Hence, more and more Africans see superstition, although conveyed with some other terms, as a constructive explanation for disturbing social, religious, economic and political problems.