

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **CULTISM – MEANING AND TYPES**

#### **Course Outline**

1. Meaning of Cultism
2. Origin of Cultism
3. Types of Cultism
4. Cult Group Signs/Symbols
5. Reasons for Joining Cults

#### **Conceptual Background**

##### **Meaning of Cultism**

##### **What is Cult?**

A cult is a small group of people who have extreme beliefs and ideas which only members have access to. According to Igodo (2022), cult is any movement, organization or assemblage of people who share ideas and believe not to be made known to non-members. Any association or organization that carries its activities and functions in secret qualifies as a cult. Also any organization whose activities are not only exclusively kept away from the knowledge of others but such activities clash out at odd hours of the day, and they often clash with the accepted norms and values of everyday life qualifies as a cult.

### **What then is Cultism?**

Cultism is the membership and operation of cults. It involves secret activities where the members behave in ways that are not acceptable by society. Cultism according to Amalu, Oyo-tta and Eteng (2021) is a ritual practice by a group of people whose membership, admission, initiation, policies and activities are done secretly and kept secret with their activities having negative effects. All the operations of this group of people are kept away from the knowledge of non-members. They carry out their activities at odd hours of the day and are always at variance with the accepted norms of the society which qualify them as secret cult. Their activities have negative effects both on members and non-members. Some of the members end up being drop-out from school and the non-members at times become victims by being rape by the cultist. The members of secret cult are called cultists.

Cultism is a major social problem especially in the Nigeria society. It is being practiced in schools, campuses and even outside school environment (Alma *et al*/2021). Cultism cut across all spectra of society and the youths are the most vulnerable. Their activities take various destructive forms such as

- Sexual harassment and raping of female students
- Stealing, violent behavior, killing and gun war
- Torture, flagging, stripping to the pants and make distractive cult marks on the bodies of new members with red-hot swords during initiations

- Taking of alcoholic drinks and smoking of hard drugs like cocaine and Indian hemp that tend to give false courage.
- Pulling dangerous weapons such as daggers, knives and guns at non-members or members of other secret cults who are targets.

### **Origin of Cultism**

Secret cult societies can be traced back to the ancient Egyptians who had many magicians who practiced occultism and use occultic means to acquire more powers. They kept all their activities secret.

Cultism in Nigeria started during the pre-colonial period when a group of individuals with the main objective of seeking protection from their ancestors conducted rituals. The Igbo, Yorubas and Hausa all have secret cults. The initiations were only for those who indicated interest and once they are initiated, the secrets were religiously and sacredly observed by the members. The Ogboni society could be found among the Yoruba of South-western Nigeria. The Ekpe Secret Cult existed among the Efik of the South-South and also among the Igbos of the South-East. They gave their members social economic and political security. This was what they believed (Wachukwu, 2007).

After the abolition of slavery and the American civil war, America experienced many changes. On 24th December, 1765 the Ku klux Klan (KKK) was founded in Pulaski, Tennessee as a Terrorist Organization by six well educated veterans (Soldiers who fought in the war) of the confederated army. As a secret cult they targeted freed men (Ex-Slaves) and those who gave them freedom. It sou

ght to restore white supremacy by threats and violence including murder against blacks and those who supported them. Many secret cults in Nigerian universities were inspired by the activities of the Ku Klux Klan of the United States of America.

In the 1950s, nationalism was intensified in Nigeria with the aim of fighting colonialism and gaining independence for Nigeria. Hence Nigerian students were not left out in this fight for independence. According to Igodo (2022) the very first manifestation of the confraternity tradition on Nigeria campus started at University College, Ibadan in 1952. It is known as Seadogs Confraternity (aka Pirates Confraternity) now known as National Association of Nigerian Sea Dogs (NANSO). It was championed by Nigeria's only Nobel Laureate Prof. Wole Soyinka, Aig-Imoukhuede, Pius Olegbe, Ralph Opara, Nat Oyelola and Prof. Muiyilwa Awe. They had good faith and with good intention for the formation of this cult group. Their activities and operations were aimed at fighting colonialism and oppression. They equally rendered social services such as blood donation to hospitals and presentation of gifts to orphanage homes etc.

For twenty years, the Pirates confraternity dominated the Nigerian university scene before other cults came into existence. Their action and mannerism were all symbolic and imitative of the Pirates of the Treasure Island Literature book. Between 1960s and 1970s, Pirates confraternity was not known for violence. They socialized freely. Mostly they were brilliant students who went about their academic business without trampling on the fundamental rights of other students. They never practiced primitive savagery or wickedness that is common among present-day cultists.

According to Igodo (2022) in the 70s and 80s trouble broke out in the cult as a

result of unresolved leadership problems. Some members of the cult broke out and formed the Buccaneers Association of Nigeria (BAN), aka Sealords. Some of them formed the Vikings fraternity which led to the expulsion of secret cults in Nigerian Universities. The Buccaneers Association of Nigeria was founded in 1992 at the University of Benin. Others like the Mafia Confraternity, the National Association of Airlords (Eiye fraternity) which used to be a cultural secret society, the Vikings fraternity, the Neo Black Movement of Africa or Black Axe Confraternity, the War Lords (brotherhood of Don) were all formed in the various Universities in Nigeria.

By the early 1990s, there were cult explosion in Nigeria such as Maphite, KKK, the Mgba brothers, the Red Devils, Red Berets, Green Barets, the Trogon Horse and others. The female students were not left out. They formed their own groups and acted as spies for the male confraternities and operated as prostitution syndicates. Among the female cults were the Daughters of Medusa, White Angels, Dirty Virgins, the Amazons, the Sharons, Daughters of Eve, Black Queens, etc. Unfortunately, these cults have filtered into secondary schools and are seriously destroying the lives of our vibrant youths.

### **Types, Signs/Symbolism of Cultism**

There are so many cults groups in Nigeria higher institution. Below are the eight (8) most popular according to Amalu *et al* (2021).

1. The Seadogs confraternity (aka Pirates) – their symbol is human skull on two crossed bones
2. The Buccaneers Association of Nigeria – their symbol is Yellow shirts and Yellow socks.

3. The Mafia Confraternity/Maphites - their symbols is handkerchief s, green ribbon on beret
4. Black Stars – Their symbols is beret with inscription
5. The New Black Movement or Black Axe Confraternity – their symbol is crossed bones, black ribbons on beret.
6. The Vikings fraternity – Their symbols is small black pick axe
7. The National Association of AirLords (EIYE) – their symbol is axe on black skull, black on black dress, red ribbon on beret
8. The Warlords (Brotherhood of Don) – their symbol is beret with inscription of stars.

### Reasons for Joining Cults

There are so many reasons why people join cult. Here are some of the reasons.

1. **For protection:** Cults were formed to shield their members from suffering in the hands of other boys and cult groups in institutions. New initiates were lured with a promise of protection by the cult group.
2. **To assert supremacy:** Secret cult can be established because some group of male students begins to see themselves as superior

and powerful and possibly wealthier than the others students. Thus, they seize that means to form those cults just to prove they are superior to others. People of like minds join.

3. **Good Academic performance:** Some join cults to ensure high success in their academic pursuit. They achieve things by threatening and harassing lecturers with guns and machetes requesting for unmerited grades. Any lecturer who refused to comply may end up losing his/her life.
4. **Desire for brotherhood:** People join cult because of the brotherly relationship. Those who formed it gave the impression that brotherly relationship exist. Their intention is to protect, love and defend one another even if they have to kill. They also claim to love each other, showing affection and loyalty to themselves as people who have something in common.
5. **Fight against injustice:** Some people join cult just to fight injustice on campus and in the society. The cult members claim they confront lecturers that harass students especially the female students and fight for the benefit of all the students.
6. **Economic hardship:** Many parents fail to provide for their children in the higher institutions as a result of poverty. Some of the parents are also too busy to attend to their children for one reason or the other. Cult members offer their member financial assistance and so others are attractive to indigent members.
7. **Peer pressure:** Some people whose friends are cult members convince their friends to become members too

8. **Curiosity:** A lot of information have been disseminated about cults and so many people become cult members in order to confirm what they have heard.
9. **Lack of self-confidence:** People who have lacked affection and have unfulfilled desires may join cults in order to secure affection, popularity, protection and gain strong support from members.
10. **Family background:** Some parents who were former campus cult members have their children attracted to cult. Some parents also encourage their children to join some of the cults that they like.

### **How to curb cultism in our campus**

Apart from review of admission policy of tertiary institutions, review of school curriculum, provision of recreational/sporting activities, organizing orientation programme for students in tertiary institution and asking the National Assembly to make a law making cultism a grievous offence which attract capital punishment as stated by Oladeji (2002) and Opatola (2002).

There is need for instant Curative and on the spot strategies at eliminating and eradicating cultist activities in tertiary institution. Since cultist activities are conducted in secrecy and as such the venues of such meetings are hideouts, serene and deserted areas with and around the campus. It is important that:

- 1, Security outfits in high institution should endeavour to identify blackouts areas or sports where nocturnal meetings or cultists could be held.
2. Serene atmosphere in and around the campuses that has conglomerati



on of trees with seeming like recreational background are hide-out of cultists.

To this end, when proper identification of such areas has been done, it prepare a veritable background for security operatives in schools to apprehend cultists.

3. Security operatives on campus should be trained in the latest technology of surveillance especially in gathering vital information by using covert activities in detecting students who engage in cultism.
4. Each faculty should have a close check on their students and if need be mount closed circuit to monitored the activities of the students in the faculty. By so doing, one may recorded their secret meeting without them having an inkling that their nefarious and nocturnal activities are being recorded and thus leading to their apprehended and made to face the full wrath of the law.
5. Enough fund should be made available to the security unit of higher institutions for them to be able to carry out timely operations to wipe out the ugly menace of cultist activities and in around campuses.
6. Body language techniques could be used to a large extent in identifying cult members. Most of them have weird looks, queer attitude, have colours like red attire that connotes danger, and black attire which is symbolic of death to anyone who dares to usurp their territory. Since there is a closed link between hard drugs and cultism, any student within and around the school campus that is apprehended with hard drug is a suspect cultist. Therefore the security personnels should be alerted to their responsibilities and most especially a stop

and search mode of operation should be carried out on students.

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