

EXPLORING THE ROLES OF SECRECY AND CONFIDENTIALITY IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL PRACTICES: A CASE STUDY OF RAIN MAKING RITUALS

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Abstract

African renaissance today is both a necessity and an emergency. This is because Africans are becoming more aware of the reality of the lack of exploration of their rich autochthonous values. The problem is that many African traditional practices, rain makers, inclusive have been grossly misinterpreted and misrepresented as evil, fetish and diabolical. One of the issues raised against African traditional rain making lies on the question of secrecy and non – exposure for scientific tests and verification. This has further led to the neglect of its vital roles for sustainable development. This paper, using qualitative method of inquiry explored through interviews and field experiments, attempts to justify the significance of secrecy and confidentiality in African traditional practices. This work therefore recommends the indexing of all rain makers and the involvement of the government in their training and development. Patent right as well as other relevant legislations must be designed to accommodate and protect the interest of the rain maker. The scientific and magico – spiritual laws as well as other traditional values which rain making underscores can be harnessed for global relevance.

Keywords: *dibija*, rain making, magico – spiritual, science, secrecy, confidentiality.

INTRODUCTION

The traditional African society which operates a loose democracy, otherwise called Ohacracy (Njaka, cited in Okafor, 1997) is a civilization built around a deep appreciation of the spiritual and God – given laws of nature. It is a civilization that is pro-life as it is believed that *Ndubuisi* (Life is the first thing) and *Nduka* (Life is supreme). The African worldview and cosmology enhances the exploration of the enormous values innate in the natural environment for the good of man. It also appreciates and operationalizes the deep magico – spiritual laws for the enhancement of human life and the security of life and property. These laws identified by James Frazer in his book “*The golden bough*”, as the foundation of scientific innovations finds its expression in the deep spiritual and religious world of the traditional Igbo – African championed by the *dibija*. The role of the *dibija* in human society among the Africans cannot be over emphasized. However these vital roles they play that can contribute to sustainable development in traditional Africa have been

grossly misinterpreted in the modern era. One area of criticism of some African practices like rain making centres on the issue of non exposure for scientific test.

To many, gaining access into the secrets of the *dibia* profession is an impossibility. This is due to the fact that the knowledge of the *dibia* which could at best be regarded as classified information is hardly made available to an outsider. There are a lot of other secrets associated with many traditional African practices. This research work focused on justification of the non-disclosure of certain information associated with African rain making to the public. Working with several *dibia mmiri* (rain maker) for about six (6) years provides this research work with great credibility to discuss the place of secrecy and confidentiality in the Igbo – African socio – political and religious life.

IGBO – AFRICAN CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

The Igbo tribe of Africa, located in the tropical climate are an agrarian people, blessed with good weather that translates to a fertile land. The Igbo people originally were traditionalists, with their unique religion and culture. Slavery, colonial and religious missionary enterprises later blended the religion and worldview of the people into a cosmopolitan state. Traditionally, the Igbo – African world is a world of animate, inanimate and spiritual beings. This is the reason the Africa tells his folktales and lores with imageries of man, animal, trees, spiritual beings and even the dead, all being intricately webbed into one piece in a symbolic union that projects one global brotherhood. Indeed for the Africa what affects the human person could have its origin in the spirit world or with dead ancestors. In Africa, there is no clear – cut distinction between the spiritual and the physical, nor between the sacred and the profane world. The spiritual world is in constant interaction with the physical world. This may be seen as a reason for the adulation of the environment by the Africa.

For the Africa, the violation of the environment or certain community ethical standard could have far reaching effect on the living and the society at large. What naturally follows is the appeasement of the gods and ancestors as would be prescribed by the *dibia* or elders. This is why Africa views nature with great reverence and trepidation, as they are aware that the material objects in the environment are not mere secular, but rather have sacred and magico – spiritual values for the human society. Indeed as Eneji *et al* (2012) stated, “Everything and every act are looked upon in a religious and customary perspective” (p. 48). This is because as they stated “Africans view themselves as part of the environment (and) man is conceivable only in this cosmic interweavement” (p. 48). Continuing Eneji *et al* noted that “... plants, animals, rock, water and other non-living things are part of nature, which is the product of creation deserving to be respected as much as human beings who are also part of nature” (p. 48). This is the reason Africans have been tagged animist. Indeed, as a system of believe of many indigenous people, animism perceives all things including rocks, animal and plant and their parts, rivers, weather system, human handiwork, and even words as being animated, having agency and free will and distinct spiritual essence. Africans believe that man is in close knit with the entire cosmos.

The cosmos is the entire nature and everything therein including the trees, herbs, animals, seas and other water bodies and indeed every created thing observable in nature as well as the spiritual and magical laws of nature. Henshey (cited in Eneji *et al*. 2012) noted that “... in traditional African societies... many people believed that rocks, trees, streams, ponds and forests were the manifestations of the power of the Supreme Being” (p. 48). These natural bodies manifest in them the magical and spiritual laws of nature and these are in sync with the design of the creator

who made them for the good of man and the world. These are sacred places where for the indigenous people, the spiritual and magical laws of nature are activated and explored for the good of the society. This sacred *loci* could be any natural phenomena which, as Thorley and Gunn (2008) noted is a crossing – place where man can access the ineffable spirit and energies of another realm, a place for communication and discourse with the gods or the spirit of the place. Martos (1982) conceives this bridge as a heirophany.

Gray (cited in Thorley and Gunn, 2008) in his book entitled *Sacred and Magical Places: an Exploration of their Mysterious Powers*, discussed the categories of sacred spaces. Some of the spaces he listed include oracular caves and mountains, male deity/god shrines, female deity/goddess shrines, places with enigmatic fertility legends and images, places with miracle – working icons, places of Marian apparitions, unique natural features, places where UFOs or other anomalous extra – terrestrial phenomena have been seen. Gray who was a monk and a pilgrim, in identifying natural features in the landscape all over the world listed factors which in his consideration contribute to the power of a place. Some of them include the presence of accumulated spiritual energy from centuries of ceremonial activity at the shrine or from large number of pilgrims who have visited the sacred site. One can by extension consider the cauldron or the site used by the rain maker as a place of accumulated spiritual energy and impact. Gray further noted the significance of the intent of an individual pilgrim, the physical activity of the pilgrim and the heightened effect of religious practice performed at the sacred site, the power or charge emanating from relics, ceremonial objects and miraculous idols, mysterious influences of spirits or angelic beings associated with the sacred sites. These exude unimaginable spiritual and magical powers for the believer.

These sites according to Carmicheal (cited in Thorley and Gunn, 2008) enables an individual to interact with the forces of the natural and supernatural worlds, deriving from a variety of plants, animals and meteorological phenomena. He noted that this power is offered to deserving individuals by the spirits, usually through dreams and visions. The vocation of the *dibia* or the Igbo rain maker hinges on this ability to interact with these forces of natural and supernatural worlds. These magical and spiritual powers can have unimaginable consequences to the human society when violated. Though there is no central control system, unauthorized access to these secrets of nature is not a welcome development. Within the African circle, masquerades and other cultic groups, including the *dibia* exist to protect these dangerous horizons of human life and to limit access to them only to the initiated.

IGBO SOCIO – POLITICAL GOVERNMENT AND CONTROL

In Igbo land, the socio – political set – up involves the executive, judiciary and legislature. There are no strict judicial institutions as most African communities practice a loose type of democracy. However, though with a decentralized government, which Njaka (cited in Okafor, 1992) called *Qhacracy*, and contrary to the notion of primitivity, the Igbo society had a unique civilization and government. *Qhacracy* is a situation where each village operated as a sovereign unit with its own closely knit administration. In this, decision making was made at the *oha* (General Assembly) with authority distributed across the various villages led by their village head or representative. The society was egalitarian. While the Western criminal legal system viewed the state as the primary victim of every criminal violation of the law, the Igbo justice system viewed the same as direct harm to the individual and the community. Hence the adoption of ostracism for

nne ochu (grave offences) or *ikpu aru* (cleansing) for lesser offences. Beyond these regulations, the society offered the people unrestricted freedom to explore their world.

The traditional Igbo society had no instrument for the control and legislation against right or violation of intellectual property or of the use of knowledge except when these obstruct societal cohesion. Everyone had all the latitude to explore and outwit the other. Indeed the society admires and celebrates industry and expertise including that of the *dibia*, especially when such is done to improve the human society and solve human problems. Okafor (1992) noted that "... individual rights are highly respected in Igbo country" (p. 77). Thus there is apparent lack of regulation in the exploration of individual talent, knowledge and capacity. An individual can therefore go to any length to acquire any specialised knowledge as long as it doesn't impede on the life of the society. Thus such specialised skills like magic or sorcery only become a crime when they impede on the life of any member of the society. Beyond that, there is no proscription or legislation against such specialised knowledge. The *dibia* therefore has the right to hoard the secret of his job as it is wholly a product of his industry and exploration.

The Igbo cherished right to property is demonstrated with the name *Nkemdilim* or *Ejimkonye*. According to Okafor (1992) "In the Igbo traditional society, the individual rights to freedom of expression, of thought and action are recognised, respected and cherished in keeping with the principle of '*Ohacracy*' " (p. 81). This is because as the saying goes, *aka di onye mma ka o na-aehibe n'isi* (one supports his head with whichever hand he or she finds convenient). There is no form of censorship. *Odibendi* and *omenala* are two concepts that guarantee each society the right to their own custom as different from the others. According to Okafor, this realization prepares the Igbo "to move into a strange area without disturbing its people" (p. 82). Indeed as Okafor stated, *omume ndi* affirms that each state has its own customs and way of life as long as people of the state continue to welcome them. It is the *oha* that determines morality and legislates on human activity depending on the greater good of greater members of the society.

Thus, acquisition of esoteric knowledge becomes an offense for the *dibia* not because he possesses such capacity but that such vitiates the peaceful coexistence of the society. Beyond that, no one is worried over the acquisition of this knowledge. This is because the knowledge might be useful to the community in certain fields of human endeavour. The pain and regret of the elders at the misfortune that befell Okonkwo of Chinua Achebe's *Things fall apart*, at the funeral of Akukalia, a kinsman, could therefore be understood. Okonkwo's gun went off unexpectedly during the funeral ceremonies and killed the son of the deceased. The issue was not with the gun that Okonkwo was holding which had the use of being flaunted with pomp to grace the funeral occasion, but that the same gun which served its purpose to the admiration of all, suddenly became the instrument that took away the life of the son of the deceased. That was the reason Okonkwo's friend Obierika; in sympathy for the misfortune that befell his friend, stood by Okonkwo and kept checking on him while he was in exile. It was evident that the gun Okonkwo wielded was not intended to kill, yet he had to go into exile for committing what was considered as a female *ochu* (grave offense/abomination).

THE DIBIA AS THE HARBINGER OF ANCIENT, REVEALED AND LETHAL WISDOM

Many scholars have tried describing the *dibia* with several names ranging from herbalist, medicine man, priest, diviner, prophet, rain maker, etc. But for Umeh (1997), no word can correctly and sufficiently define the term *dibia*. This is because any English word used to describe *dibia* would be grossly deficient as long as it fails to accommodate the herbal, medicinal, spiritual,

psychological, mysterious, and magical, specialist's roles and vocations and other ambiances of the *dibịa* work. According to Akwa – Udene na Nnobi (Personal Communication, 9th August, 2024), *dibịa* is someone who is a saviour to people in time of great difficulty. Beyond the popular roles of the *dibịa*, he noted that the *dibịa* could be mere *dibịa oghanje* or *dibịa* that does some deep spiritual roles. Etymologically, *dibịa* is a two – letter word: *di* (master) and *abia* (wisdom/knowledge). Hence one could state that any person with the mastery of any specialized knowledge or solution is a *dibịa* in his own field. It could be in the area of religion, spirituality and esoteric matters, health, science and technological, engineering and other endeavours of human activity. A *dibịa* is therefore a master of a certain specialized knowledge that positively impacts the human society.

In the absence of the correct word to describe the *dibịa* phenomena in English, we chose to adopt the nearest applicable meaning in the course of, and for the purpose of this work. The *dibịa*, otherwise called African traditional medicine man by Iwu (2014) is a traditional medicine practitioner with a unique role and specialized skill in the society. According to Iwu, he or she could become a medicine practitioner by family inheritance, by *agwu* (spirit) possession or by training. *Dibịa* could be *dibịa afa*, *dibịa ogwu* or *dibịa aja*. Iwu continued that there exist another group of traditional healers with specialised skills. These could be priests and others who are “gifted ordinary people with the secrets to cure some specific intractable diseases” (p. 392). Some others include rain makers and other masters in critical societal religious, spiritual and health issues. These specialists, who according to Iwu, could be referred to as consultants include priests of many gods/goddesses and oracles. They employ various methods to procure healing and wholeness for their client and the society at large.

General findings indicate that:

An African indigenous system of medicine is composed of three essential parts: the active medicinal substance, which may be plants, soil, insects, or animal parts; the spiritual forces, the gods and God; and the human spirit, which includes the healer and the patient. (Iwu, 2014, p. 367).

These components make the work of the *dibịa* effective and bring about healing and wholeness to the society. While the active medicinal substance may be empirically evident to people, the spiritual forces and the human spirit is purely metaphysical and not accessible to all. This is clearly the area where the magico – spiritual phenomena is observed and explored. At the level of material substance though, we still observe as Iwu noted that there is a real struggle for existence between all creatures, including plants and even stones, each individual holding its place by some innate strength of personality. He noted that “it is common to see a traditional healer talking to a tree or stone – challenging the material obstacle of the object to appeal to the life force within, to control and use it for the benefit of his or her patient” (p. 368). Thus:

A healer's power is determined not only by the number of efficacious herbs he or she knows but also by the magnitude of the healers understanding of the natural laws and the ability to utilize them for the benefit of his or her patient and the whole community. (p. 368).

Iwu noted further that:

The sterile use, *per se*, of different leaves, roots, fruits, barks, grasses, and various objects such as minerals, dead insects, bones, feathers, shells, eggs, powder, and the smoke from

different burning objects for the cure and prevention of diseases is only an aspect of traditional African medicine. (p. 368).

Thus, beyond the essential need for capacity in the area of knowledge of roots and herbs, Iwu recognised the spiritual and magical powers in the natural phenomena. He stated further that:

All creatures and objects are believed to possess some psychic quality. If a sick person is given a leaf infusion to drink, the person drinks it believing not only in the organic properties of the plant but also in the magical or spiritual force imbued by nature in all living things and the role of his or her ancestors, spirits, and the gods in the healing process. (p. 368).

The above goes to showcase the unwavering faith in the mystical and magical powers of natural phenomena employed by all brands of *dibija* in African healthcare system. This has opened a plethora of knowledge and discoveries involving positive and negative sciences, magic, witchcraft, poison, magical spells and so on. It has therefore become expedient to prevent some of these information from unauthorized hands and protect the society from harm. Umeh (1997) noted the capacity of the mysterious and magical prowess of ancient *dibija* when he stated that:

A bird flying across the sky would be brought down by the *dibija* merely telling it to come down. Some would ask the bird to come and land at the *okwu agwu/agwu's* sacred grove/altar and it is done immediately... knives and such objects can be suspended in space... Instant rainfall can be produced even at the height of the dry season. (p. 125).

The above represents a weird capacity which places the element of nature at the immediate control of anyone that possesses its knowledge. So essentially the reason for the non – disclosure of the secrets of nature to every Tom, Dick and Harry is to shield the secrets of these weird and lethal magical powers from the hands of the common man while reserving it for those who would be circumspect in the wielding of such powers. This is because a misuse of such powers could have devastating effect on the life, security, social and spiritual cohesion of the community. When pressed for disclosure by the uninitiated or lay person or to give explanation to certain secrets, the wise person would rather query: *! juta isi nkita, i were agba ya mee gini?* (What would you do with the knowledge when you acquire it?). This response strikes a final cadence to the question.

THE ROLE OF THE RAIN MAKER AND THE MIX OF SECRECY

The role of the rain maker is to water the farm and environment, provide water for man and animal to drink or to prevent the rain from falling and disrupting social events, ceremonies and festivals. The rainmaker wields enormous capacity like every other *dibija* “because of the complete interpenetration of ‘magico-spiritual’ and ‘rational’ elements” (Iwu, p. 371). African rain making is both scientific and magico – spiritual. It is scientific because it employs physical objects which are empirical and verifiable in the laboratory to effect the required reaction of the atmospheric energies. It is magico – spiritual when the rain maker employs vibratory power of words and incantation, prayers or makes some signs which have the capacity for the precipitation or control of rain. It is purely about manipulating the forces of nature to his or her advantage. According to Strassberg (cited in Emedolu, 2015), “magic, religion, science, technology, and ethics are components of cultures that coexist at every stage of the evolution of societies and cultures” (p. 69). African magic like its European counterpart builds on the fact that European magic and indeed its counterpart African magic is the very matrix of a truly scientific experimentation.

Science is a discovery and systematization of hidden natural laws of nature. Henry (cited in Emedolu, 2015) notes that “history reveals that modern science was able to make such rapid gains in the 17th century only by plundering natural magic” (p. 73). Emedolu observed that “magic, as it were, paved the road for modern empirical science” (p. 73). He observed that “modern western science was able to make its mark from the debris of African science of antiquity – call it magic or what you will” (p. 74). Emedolu stresses further that “the two concepts, science and magic, were kept apart only in later modern thinking” (p. 73). That is to say that science and magic can be synonymous or, at best, magic could be called an unexplored science. Emedolu concludes with the fact that:

Contemporary science still retains some magical charms as much as the modern science did. To an innocent mind scientific experiment, even as much as we know it today, is as magical as ever. It essentially stops holding its magical fancy when we rationalize and understand the technical implications of its design. (p. 73).

Rain making and control is a natural science that builds on the laws of nature which is available through the herbs, roots, animals and other plant parts with other paraphernalia. There are hazards associated with science, magic inclusive, and some of them can be lethal if not handled professionally. The capacity of a particular rain maker or controller to harness, explore and control these hidden laws of nature gives him or her some edge over others. The rain maker who has the capacity to withhold the rain can also apply it as a punitive measure against the community or persons, as he or she wills. This is because as Emedolu (2015) noted, science “helps us to exploit and dominate nature” (p. 71).

Emedolu (2015) notes that the African experimental scientist doesn’t wait for nature to reveal itself, but rather does some violence to nature and fast-track the process of unveiling of nature. Hence both from self – discovery and acquired knowledge, the rain maker is equipped to explore nature to his or her advantage. As it is general with every experiment, mistakes are made and hazards are discovered and red – lines could mistakenly be crossed. The capacity of the rain maker depends on the information available to him. Some have the capacity not only to make or control rain, but even the capacity to make hot sun shine, harmattan, thunder storm or lightening. All these are possible through the administration of certain herbs, roots or some other material objects. Some of them may not be agreeable to the society, but the one who possesses the knowledge wields the power.

Our researches unearthed a lot of reasons why the rain maker operates in great secrecy. Few of them are here outlined:

1. While attesting that there is no evil associated with the work of the rain maker, R. Agubuike (Personal Communication, 19th May, 2019) holds that rainmaking and control is purely African herbal science. He noted however that the work of the *dibija* can misfire and misfortune could befall the rain maker or his family if he or she contravenes certain cosmic laws. According to him, *mmiri di ka egbe na – amaghi di nwe ya* (rain making is like a gun that can shoot and inflict maximum damage on the wielder). Thus, in the addition and removal of the herbs and stones, extra carefulness is observed in order not to ignite thunder or lightening, and mistakenly inflict harm on persons. Therefore rain making information is controlled.
2. Rainmaking like every *dibija* work is a profession that abhors riff – raffs, but admits cool headed persons who would be able to endure the discipline of the job which requires steady

monitoring during the rain making or control process to ensure there are no mistakes or failures. Even when the riff-raffs in the profession fail in their job, it amounts to failure of the entire rain makers and that brings disrepute and undermines the credibility of the profession. Indeed, *onye isi ayagha a naghị ekpu mmonwu* (a careless person does not wear the masquerade).

3. For D. Atasi (Personal Communication, 29th May, 2020), *odinala* is difficult to explain and convince the public about. It is difficult to convince unbelievers of the possibility of rainmaking. Thus the need to keep it away from the prying eyes of the public and save oneself unnecessary explanation. He noted further that the place of the making or control of rain is naturally not a good sight in terms of neatness, due to the numerous materials used. Hence the need to keep it away from the prying eyes of the public.
4. For C. Mgbemena (Personal Communication, 29th April, 2020), the art of rain making must be kept secret to avoid some persons using it to settle scores.
5. Any unnecessary exposure makes the profession less attractive. It is evident as Nkamigbo (Personal Communication, 19th May, 2020) noted that if a patient goes to a *dibịa* for an ailment that could be cured with a very well known leaf, oftentimes, the *dibịa* does not immediately go to get the leaves in the patient's view. Usually he asks the patient to go home and return another day during which interphase he tries to disguise the leaf so that the client would no longer recognise it. The strangeness of this hitherto normal leaf has some placebo effect and enhances healing.
6. Umeh (1997) stated that "no knowledgeable *dibịa* ever wanted to part with his special power". He quoted his father to have stated that *aha – agba aku nánwu* (you don't make public knowledge of your wealth). Another *dibịa* he noted told him: *nkwyuchaa m dobe nke m jiri chebe onwe m* (after disclosing other secrets I must reserve the one with which I protect myself). Mgbemena and Nnedim insisted that rain making like every other profession in the business world enjoy certain level of secrecy which secure certain competitive advantage. They wondered that if business men and churches guard their secrets and profession and are not accused of charms and witchcraft, why is the rain maker given negative tag for doing exactly what they do?
7. C. Mgbemena (Personal Communication, 29th April, 2020) argues further that it was also necessary that they protect the secrets of their business because some of them spent much money to learn and continue learning the job.
8. According to Agubuike and Mgbemena, it was necessary that the rain maker protect himself from the prying eyes of the public to deter detractors from their locations and ensure their safety.
9. D. Nnedim (Personal Communication, 26th November, 2020) noted that if the rain making secrets become easily available to the public, enemies might begin to counter their work and cause them failure thereby bringing opprobrium to their profession.
10. The Igbo have an adage that *ofeke mara ogwu imara na umunna ya agwula* (a miscreant with knowledge of medicine spells doom for his kinsmen). It is therefore dangerous for the riff – raff to have access to the secret of herbs, roots, and other medicine. This is for security of lives and properties.
11. Umeh (1997) noted that *agwu*, who he identified as Holy Spirit, does not do evil and that is the reason "all great *dibias* in Igboland desist from doing evil even in the face of extreme provocation" (p. 107). Yet, the *dibịa* "have the knowledge of destructive forces more lethal and precise in action and more easily employed than the greatest nuclear weapon" (p. 107).

This knowledge is based on the fact that what saves can also kill. He buttressed this when he said that:

the *dibija* knows that life is a continuum and therefore, whatever ill he or she generates waits on him or her for final squiring, and being convinced that whoever gives a loaded gun to a small child who does not appreciate its lethal potency and so misuses it in gunning down someone, then the guilt will be borne and suffered by the *dibija*. (p. 126).

Therefore the *dibija* upholds the principle of *ometalu buru* (whoever sins should suffer for his or her offenses). *Ometalu dobelu ikwu na ibe abughi ezigbo afa* (exposing your wards and family to suffer for your offenses is not a good thing).

12. To protect his offspring from the consequences of breaking any of the rules attached to the exercise of miraculous and mystic powers of great dimension, even the secrets are atimes kept off their beloved sons and daughters. Umeh noted when he pressed his own father who was a great *dibija* to reveal to him the secrets of *Ishi-agu* and *Ekili* (astral travel). His father merely laughed and told him that he would “not be able to keep the rules under modern conditions into which we have found ourselves” (p. 126). According to Umeh, he promised him that he (Umeh) will not put what the father would tell him into practice. The reply of his father was to query him of the essence of a knowledge that would not be put into use. His father continued that there was a secret he will disclose to someone and if the person misuses it, the original source of the secret will share in the guilt. So “if I could neither teach nor practice, was it not wiser that I kept off them entirely” (p. 126), Umeh admitted.

Umeh had earlier given an insight into the precarious nature of the *dibija* work. According to him, he visited a certain *dibija* named Chief Echezona of Ikenga Ogidi in the 1950s. He narrated the nature of astral travel as practised by Chief Echezona. This he said was done with two tortoise shells. During the astral travel (ministration), the use of the word *onwu* by either the *dibija* or his client was prohibited. The Chief Echezona rather would call a certain man and inform him that ‘*omebigo*’ (i.e the person has spoilt). These writers would recall that, in the past, people were forbidden from mentioning certain names like *agwo* (snake) especially at night, because of the fear that the poisonous animal would be invoked by the vibratory power of words. Pseudo names like *eriri* (rope) were chosen, in the alternative. The consequences of the violation of these rules could be fatal. Thus there was select and controlled information as no right thinking person hands over a naked fire to a toddler.

It could therefore be said that the fear of modernity, security of lives and properties, safety measures against accidents, maintenance of relevance, and business and economic advantages were essentially the significant reasons why a lot of knowledge were guarded in secret, with the situation that some are already lost. Indeed certain requests are met with the query; *ị jụta isi nkịta i were nti ya mee ginị* (if you get this knowledge what will you do with its implications). It is a subtle way of refusing to disclose a secret. The popular maxim was that *diochi anaghị akọcha ihe ọ furu nélu nkwu* (the palm-wine tapper does not reveal all he saw when he was at the top of his palm tree).

Note that, even in government circle, there are classified information that must not be disclosed even when one has access to them. The traditional Igbo society went further to place a ban on women having access to certain gatherings and information. This was to prevent women who by

their nature are very flippant from disclosing the information to the wrong hands and thereby endangering the life of the community.

It must be stated that the science of rain making and control is not really a complex one, *per se*, but for the carriage of the specialist. M. Obi – Nwagbo (Personal Communication, 29th April, 2020) made it clear that there is no deep and difficult process in rain making and control, and that is why he could delegate his wife and children who have learnt the job from him to execute it on his behalf when he was unavoidably absent. It is evident that the leaves, roots and all the paraphernalia of rainmaking are natural objects found in our immediate environment and are in constant use by the people, but for the secrecy which makes it difficult for the people to recognise them as materials for rain making and control. This position however seems to be a deviation from the position of many *dibija* like Asouzu (cited in Emedolu, 2015) who noted that “African scientific experience in its original form is couched in, or anchored on the mythico – religious method” (p. 71). This mythico – spiritual realm of human reality is like a bottomless and mysterious arm of human reality that like an ocean can swallow its possessor. Even the *dibija* who wields it does not have the full grasp of the length and breadth of the knowledge he holds. This calls for caution by both the *dibija* and the general society. One wonders then how vulnerable the society could be when such knowledge is made available to a miscreant who may throw caution to the wind and explore the knowledge against the society or his/her perceived enemies.

FACING THE GLOBAL WORLD AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The traditional Igbo society explored secrecy and confidentiality for the proper ordering and control of the society. Today it has become expedient to showcase the traditional African autochthonous values and talents to the global community. It is a digital age that requires advanced technology and digital exploration of these magico – spiritual values. Due to the absence of security for intellectual property at the traditional level of these rain maker, a lot fear is palpable and impedes the exposure and critical development of the traditional *dibija* sector. James Frazer has positioned that human civilization began with magic, advanced through religion to the current level of science. Essentially Frazer opined that magic is the grandfather of science as science is built on the magical laws of nature. For Africa to grow to global relevance, a conscious effort must be made to explore her traditional values to discover and unearth unique and traditional African science.

Today, ethnomedicine has proven to be effective in contributing to health and wholeness especially in the solution of some intractable diseases that have defiled orthodox medicine. A lot orthodox medicine and discoveries have also been built on the discoveries in ethnomedicine. The same could be obtainable in science and technology and other fields of human endeavours. The critical sector of traditional Igbo – African health system must be galvanized and a lot of values being lost on daily basis be explored and positioned for the good of humanity.

There is also in existence patent and intellectual property right that protects individual innovations and entrepreneurial achievements of the citizens. Patent protection in the pharmaceutical industry is an intellectual property right that protects the inventions of persons and enables him or her gain from his or her innovations. Pharmaceutical companies who invest in research and development are given a minimum of 20 years within which period it is expected that they recoup the cost of their investment in the discovery of a new drug. During this period other companies cannot manufacture the same drugs or sell the same drug. No company is also expected to develop a generic version of the same drug. This enables the original inventor to recover the

cost of his invention, make profit and fund future research. Unfortunately this patent protection/right has become a serious challenge to healthcare development in the pharmaceutical industry, as the consideration for financial gain denies the world of quality and affordable healthcare. It must be stated that, while traditionally, patent protection in the *dibija* profession was focused on saving human life and properties than making pecuniary gains, in the case of pharmaceutical industries, it is purely for pecuniary reasons.

Also government at all levels employ various tactics to the management of information due to its incendiary nature. After the Nigerian (Biafran) Civil war, the government apparently placed an embargo on the scientific discoveries of the break – away defunct Biafran scientists. This was for a purpose. Today, the government also clamps down on illicit gun and military soft and hardware manufacturing outfits and even destroys the illegal refineries in the Niger Delta regions of Nigeria because of non- compliance with relevant state regulations. These measures are for policy, security and economic reasons. The advantage of indexing of medical personnel and other scientists must be extended to the *dibijas*. Further and advanced training and development is to be extended to them too to meet global standard.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Several criticism has been made against the African traditional Religion and the *dibija* phenomenon ranging from secrecy, unscientific nature and non – availability of superior western machines for experiment. The secrecy matter has been discussed extensively in this article. The issue of non – scientific nature of African medicine has also been dispensed with in this article. The government can extent a hand of fellowship to these *dibija* to enable them meet minimum standard of global acceptability. On the issue of lack of precision, Iwu (2014) answers that:

Lack of precision is by no means restricted to traditional medicine. Much of modern medicine could be dismissed as pure magic since it has long been known that placebos, the inert substances that contain no remedy but look and taste like the medicine they are imitating, could cure up to 40% of patients treated with them. (p. 372).

The doctrine of signature which is rooted in the ancient Greek and Roman philosophy of Plato and Aristotle encourages a holistic and intuitive approach to understanding the world morphological similarities. It invites us to explore the deeper connections and meanings behind created things and to unearth their innate magical and spiritual values which are its unique character. By understanding the signature of a particular phenomenon, one may gain insight into its nature, properties and potential uses. Researches into the *dibija* profession opens one up to the realization that natural law, magic and medicine in general are fields of human endeavour that if unprotected tantamount to laying bare naked fire before mere children. This is the reason why today a lot of people die due to misuse of even orthodox medicine.

Conclusively, it must be stated that the secrecy and confidentiality in traditional African practices was essentially made to protect lives and properties in the human society. Most traditional societies are so built and certain secrets guarded under oath, as deep knowledge on the secret of nature might make the society unsafe and put human lives and properties in jeopardy.

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