

Correlates of Belief System and Farming Activities in Ijumu Local Government Area Of Kogi State, Nigeria

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Abstract - This study examines the correlates of belief system and farming activities in Ijumu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. Action theory was used in this paper for understanding the relationship between a belief system and the level of farming activities in the area of study. Data for the study is elicited through questionnaires administered to ninety (90) respondents in the study area while the results were presented through the chi-square statistical technique. The results revealed that i) there is a relationship between belief in reincarnation farming and exit of youth from agriculture, ii) There is a link between traditional sacrifice and bumper harvest. Based on the above, it was recommended that the change agents should try as much as possible to supplant this popular belief (reincarnation farming) in Ijumu to avert an exodus of youths from the area. Besides, there is a need to embrace modern techniques of improving bumper harvests such as the application of Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) rather than through the cultural sacrifice to gods and ancestors.

Keywords - Belief, Reincarnation, Farming, Sacrifice, Ijumu

INTRODUCTION

Social taboos exist in invariably every tradition throughout the globe, and its represents a category of informal settings, where culture, belief guided customs or taboo itself defines the social conduct. These traditions remain their guiding principles towards the exploration of the natural endowment. Nigeria from time immemorial is an agrarian country whose economic well-being is tied to self-sustaining growth in the agricultural sector, especially in crop farming. The practice of farming involves all activities

for the production of crops and animals [1]. In rural areas of the country, agriculture seems to play a greater role in development than in urban centres. That is why people often misconstrue rural development and agricultural development.

The belief system in the rural area is often attributed to agricultural practices. In a typical rural Nigeria, like other African societies, there is the belief that, man is capable of manipulating the spirits for his sake through constant propitiatory sacrifices. Thus, rituals are made to the deities before cultivating land and planting of crops as well as a period of harvest. In the yam growing ones of eastern Nigeria, for example, the new yam ritual is a first fulfillment which must be done before new yam is considered cooked and eaten by every member of the community (Ekong, 1988).

Chacon [2] and Krech [3] remarked that the presence of traditional beliefs does not amount to a bumper harvest of agricultural produce. African Religion (AR) and cultural practices in most of the African setting are naturally friendly, therefore improving so much to natural endowment sustainability and preservation [4].The credence in reincarnation farming which is very popular among the Yoruba speaking segment of Kogi State. This practice has led to the mass exit of youth from Ijumu to urban centers for the fear of being killed in such circumstance and made to work on the farm.Implicit from the above, this paper examines the correlation between a belief system and farming activities in Ijumu local government area of Kogi State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Beliefs provide the necessary channel by which people orient themselves to their environments in ways they find satisfying, through holding certain beliefs, people find meanings in their lives explain

their frustration and justify their actions and inactions. People often cling to their beliefs because they derive emotional satisfaction from them. For instance, through beliefs, people can rationalize otherwise unpleasant actions like going to war or public executions. The holding of a similar set of core beliefs by some people is also the foundation of cooperative existence and interdependence (Ekong, 1988).

The traditional rural communities exist and maintain their identities on their inhabitants' underlying belief in the ancestral history of the founding of such communities. Similarly, families remain as single units based on the faith in commonness of identity and interests. This type of underlying belief may be objectified in external symbols such as community or family shrines, totems and other objects of common worship. To make these operational, they may have certain individuals to direct such worship by way of formalized rituals and ceremonies. The entire system of behavior and social relationships which build up around belief systems may, therefore, constitute an institution (Ekong, 1988). In his words, simply put, beliefs refer to those propositions, perceptions, creeds, tenets, among others, which an individual or group holds to be true. All sets of beliefs held by a person or group, therefore, constitute "beliefs systems" while all the people are holding the same beliefs from a moral or normative community.

In Africa and indeed Nigeria, the cultural structure holds the attribution of spiritual influences to substances called gods and deities. The real principle of African religion and conviction lies in the belief that the deities and gods are located on a rocks, rivers, ponds, trees, forest or wherever they so wish to reside within the community. The gods select their adherence through the arrangement of introduction with a core servant who is the mouthpiece of the deities residing among the peoples. The deities or gods convey its messages to the people through the Oracle or chief priest. The conviction is that the gods safeguard every community member from harm, starvation, starkness, ineffectiveness, drought, disease, war and so on. Whoever violate the laydown norms of the community would see the wrath of oracles; thus, the tradition has a high regard for the laws of the land [5]. These beliefs systems are transferred to those who are sanction by gods especially those who have attained puberty in the community during the initiation. Frequently, it is the male sex that is always

influenced by these juju priests or groups that are always preserved in customs or traditions imposed by community oracles. The customs and beliefs are all embedded in the traditions of the community that are powerful enough to regulate their day to day affairs [6], [7].

The functions of the belief system in the protection of natural resources manifested in different ways of practices which include reserved forests and serene landscapes. For example, in some part of Asia, India, in particular, a portion of lands or forests are preserved and safeguarded as reserved forests under the traditional institutions from agricultural purposes. Such jungles are very rich in natural endowment, and they contain numerous plants that are very useful and medicinal for man use. Tiwari, Barik and Tripathi [8] mentioned seventy-nine (79) reserved forests, and their floristic study indicated that these reserved farm lands habitat are not less than five hundred and fourteen (514) types signifying three hundred and forty (340) genera and one hundred and thirty-one (131) groups. Almost 1.3% of the overall reserved farmland was not tampered with while 42.1% had a comparatively thick forest, and 26.3% had scanty one, 30.3% had vulnerable farmland. Conspicuously, the type's diversity indices were higher for the reserved forest than for the destroyed farmland.

Study on two reserved forests, Oorani, and Olagapuram, located in the northwest of Pondicherry establish a significant number of one hundred and sixty-nine (169) angiosperms from the two angles. The Oorani plantation (3.2 hectares) had 74 blossoming plant species spread in 71 General and 41 groups; thirty (30) of them are forested species, eight (8) are climbing plant, and four (4) are organisms. The Olagapuram forests (2.8 ha) was more rich in varieties of one hundred and thirty-six (136) species in one hundred and twenty-one (121) genera of fifty-eight (58) groups; timbered types were fewer twenty-one (21) while nine climbers and three organisms followed [9]. The traditional conservation of non-human primates by Iban forest farmers in West Kalimantan, Indonesia, is an important part of their subsistence economy, and as such aided the promotion of certain aspects of the traditional Iban agroforestry system (Colfer, 2004).

Reincarnation belief is an integral part of African religion. The belief is that after the death of an individual, he or she can be born again to live on earth. According to Majeed [10], the concept of reincarnation, also known as rebirth, is the belief that

a 'person' (after his or her death) can be born again. The implication here is that a 'person' can inhabit different bodies at different times. Just like some other African cultures, the Yoruba people believe that human beings are born, die and move to the spirit world later to return to earth through the process of birth. The evidence, obtained at least through the method of naming newborn babies confirms the existence of this belief such as Babatunde, Iyabo, Malomo and Mosaku among others (Oluwole and Olusanya, 1994).

Closely related to the reincarnation belief is the belief in reincarnation farming which is very popular among the Yoruba speaking segment of Kogi State – the Okun's. Reincarnation farming is the belief that human beings (particularly the energetic youth) can be killed by diabolical means or in diabolical circumstances, and they are made to resuscitate in the farm plantation of the killer where they are expected to complete the remaining cycles of their life, farming for the benefit of the evil doers. This practice has claimed to have led to the mass exit of youth from Okun land to urban centers for the fear of being killed in such circumstance and made to work on the farm.

Theoretical Framework

Action theory was used in this paper for understanding the relationship between a belief system and farming activities. This theory views society as a man-made, created by a man who does not ordinarily formed by its members' construction of ideas, but a general level exposes the connections through which they intend to enforce that importance in their biographical situation (Meighan, 1986). Hence, the purpose of action standpoint is to ascertain how the activities of man metamorphosed to society other than how social being are regulated. The action theorists, as we remarked, go contrary to the position of a social system that is "ontologically and methodologically of its participants", the perception that considers society been superior to the individual. Here the progression works are direct disagreement with the functionalists' understanding, where a unit of analysis or part of the society which is viewed as a structure that portrays human conduct. Action viewpoint moves from the myopic angles of social action to broader focusing on little connections rather than the entire society.

To define the type of individual - level method that works without the functionalist theoretical assumptions, Weber designed the theory of Verstehen

(German for understanding) a notion that originated from a discipline known as Hermeneutics objects at understanding the rationale of the author and the early organization of the text. Weber wanted to spread this notion to the accepting of the society by concentrating on actors and contact to (or "intending to") recognizing the connotation behind observable conducts and events [14].

This method is far detached from that of Durkheim or Parsons together of whom emphasized the significance of wide-range analysis. Weber's approach as observed by Meighan [11] wants the user to:

- i. Describe the means in which people in the community create conducive atmosphere within which they live through both their individuals and communal lives and,
- ii. Understand and evaluate the organizational and inner arrangements used by inhabitants of the community to both acts informally and to introduce some form of restrictions on their factual circumstances.

It is against this backdrop, social action theory's assumption could be better summarized thus:

- i. That the understanding of social act must be pursued in the actor's explanation of his action.
- ii. The participant must not accept that his or her determined clarification and understanding of a condition under study at the commencement of the inquiry have any more than a questionable validity.
- iii. Focuses on little relationships other than the entire community.
- iv. Maintains that it is in the act of a person or persons that group concepts discover their meanings i.e. interest in "individualist" approach over the communist concepts.

In this respect, the social action theory to the phenomenon of belief system and agricultural practices established that despite the fact that agricultural practice could be swayed, supported or opposed by outside reasons, the community grows by its motive power and in quest of its goals. Outside influence and institution can not improve a community without the indigenous technical knowledge and input. Thus, ruralites should not be considered as mere nonentities who know little or nothing about their lives. In fact, Sinha (1998) affirmed that: "villagers are deemed to be the best scientists and argue that the notion of ignorance must be replaced by the concept of 'a potential for self-development.'" In this case, the belief system of every

society goes a long way in promoting or hindering agricultural development.

STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted among the people of Ijumu local government area of Kogi State. The state is a diverse ethnic state, and Okun indigenes are up to 20% of the Kogi State population less than the other two major but distinctively diverse tribes. The other two dominant ethnic groups are Igala and Igbira.

Ijumu local government area is located between latitude 7° 30' and 8° 10' and longitude 5° 45' and 6° 15' with Iyara as the headquarters. It has an area of 1,306 km² and a population of 119,929 at the 2006 census, with women forming 50% of this [12]. The weather of Ijumu L.G.A. belongs to the humid tropical weather with distinct periods. The wet season starts from April and ends in October. Raindrops are about 1,500mm with a relative humidity of about 75%.

Economic trees such as cocoa, kola nuts, citrus species, cashew nuts, among others are also found in large quantity. The dominant ethnic group is Yoruba, whose primary occupation is farming. Both men and women do farming. Farming is mainly rain fed. Annual crops are very common, and they include yam, maize, guinea corn, beans, cassava which are grown extensively. Indeed apart from when helping their spouses on the farms, women are also reputed to have large cassava farms [13].

The survey design was employed in this study. A sample of ninety (90) was selected from Ijumu local government. Facts for this work were collected from the main and minor sources. The research device employed in this study is a questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed through descriptive statistics while the hypotheses were tested using the chi-square (χ^2) statistical technique.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section mainly deals with the results and discussion. The results are presented through the chi-square to analyze the hypotheses formulated.

Hypothesis One

Ho: There is no relationship between Reincarnation belief and exit of youth from farming.

H₁: There is a relationship between Reincarnation belief and exit of young people from agriculture.

Table 1: Cross Tabulation of Reincarnation Belief and Exit of young people from Farming Activities

Reincarnation Belief	Rate of Youth Exit from Farming					Total
	Very High	High	Undecided	Low	Very Low	
Strong	12	30	18	51	42	153
Not strong	3	39	18	51	6	117
Total	15	69	36	102	48	270

$\chi^2 c = 9.71$, $df=4$, significance = 0.05 $\chi^2 t = 9.49$

Therefore $\chi^2 c = 9.71 > \chi^2 t = 9.49$. Thus reject H₀ and accept H₁

Verdict Rule:

Meanwhile, the calculated value of χ^2 is greater than the critical or table worth of chi-square, we reject the null hypothesis. The alternative hypothesis is therefore accepted. Thus, there is a relationship between recantation belief and exit of youth from farming in Ijumu local government. This outcome conforms to earlier findings that belief system has hampered the level of agricultural activities in the study area.

Hypothesis Two

Ho: There is no relationship between cultural sacrifice and a bumper harvest.

H₁: There is a relationship between cultural sacrifice and a bumper harvest.

Table 2: Cross Tabulation of Traditional Sacrifice and bumper harvest

Traditional Sacrifice	Bumper Harvest					Total
	Very High	High	Undecided	Low	Very Low	
Strong	12	27	27	45	42	153
Not strong	6	18	42	42	6	117
Total	18	45	69	87	48	270

$\chi^2 c = 10.27$, $df=4$, significance = 0.05 $\chi^2 t = 9.49$

Therefore $\chi^2 c = 10.27 > \chi^2 t = 9.49$. Thus reject H₀ and accept H₁

Decision Rule:

Using the same format as above, the calculated chi-square (χ^2) = 10.27. The critical value of χ^2 using 0.05 confidence interval and degree of freedom under χ^2 distribution is equal to 9.90 the computed value of χ^2 is equal to 10.27; the hence null hypothesis is rejected. We, therefore, accept the alternative hypothesis that says sacrifice has a positive impact on bumper harvest.

CONCLUSION

This paper has brought to the fore the correlation between a belief system and farming activities in Ijumu local government area of Kogi State. It has been found belief in reincarnation farming has led to the exit of youth from farming while acceptable sacrifice has an impact on bumper harvest. Based on these results, there is a need for change agents to work vigorously on how the belief in recantation farming and other horrible beliefs can be abandon to avert an exodus of youths from the area. Besides, there is a need to embrace modern techniques of improving bumper harvest such as irrigation system rather than through the cultural sacrifice to gods and ancestors.

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