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**CLASH OF TWO RELIGIONS: EROSION OF INDIGENOUS SYSTEMS BY
PENTECOSTALISM IN THE SHONA PEOPLE, ZIMBABWE**

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Abstract: This desk analysis exposes conflicts that have been created by the coming of Christianity and how they may be resolved from an endogenous perspective within the Shona people in Zimbabwe. The analysis looked at archival material and reviewed some classical literature related to the clashes pitting the two religions. The analysis is influenced by two theories: Social Dominance and Clash of Civilizations. The two theories argue that in society, there are struggles for domination which lead to conflicts among belief systems. The study acknowledges that while Pentecostal Christianity has contributed to the demise of indigenous practices through its tough approach and the use of financial resources, there are other indigenous factors. Rescuing indigenous practices from extinction may be a challenge given that almost all the institutions have adopted Christian models while association with indigenous systems is now a 'shame'. However, documentation and practicing the rituals for continuity purpose are encouraged.

Key words: Religion, traditional practices, indigenous, endogenous, conflict

1. Introduction

Religions the world over, are supposed to be unifying institutions which come in various forms and structures. Such institutions have existed in Zimbabwe for the duration of humanity's existence with the other foreign religions having existed for over one hundred and fifty years. Traditionally especially in Zimbabwe, all religions serve various purposes which however include building peace, uniting communities and standing with ordinary people in their hour of need. Though there has not been any credible study on the number of religions in Zimbabwe, some of the known include African Traditional Religion (ATR), Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism and Satanism. However, for the purpose of this study, only ATR and Pentecostal Christianity are focused with a view to understanding why and how the latter has infiltrated and brought down indigenous family systems, cultures and beliefs of most indigenous Zimbabweans. The study is motivated by the fact that Pentecostalism, a more radical appendage of Christianity, just like several other foreign religions, has literally run-down indigenous and endogenous family systems and in the process created conflicts.

It has generally been observed that Pentecostalism has managed to over-shadow other locally available religions because of its ability to avail economic resources and its rich sermons around prosperity. The prosperity mantra has been relevant in Zimbabwe because of the increasing levels of poverty and joblessness among others. Pentecostalism has also managed to make people believe that it is a superior religion that accesses job-seekers to prestigious placements while women are matched with equally superior men in society for marriage (Muchabaiwa et al, 2010).

2. Conceptual explanation

The study is specifically focused on the Shona people of Zimbabwe. This follows a realisation that Zimbabwe is made up of various nations whose traditions slightly differ because of interaction and inter-marriages amongst others. The study is important in that it helps expose conflicts that have been created by the coming of Pentecostalism and how they may be resolved from an endogenous perspective. The study is also important as it helps trace the roots and where Pentecostalism is taking indigenous family practices and systems and possibly map the feasibility of remedying the challenges.

The study is influenced by two theories; Social Dominance and Clash of Civilisations. The theory of Social Dominance Theory by Sidanius and Pratto (1999) argues that in society, prominent communities would as much as possible want to dominate and overshadow other available

communities especially if they are in competition for scarce resources (Pratto, 1999: 192-263). Complementing the above is the Clash of Civilisations by Huntington (1993), which argues that religion has a capacity to unite members of the same belief through-out the world. However, it also has the ability to pitch members of diverse faith in a perpetual religious clash and violent incompatible relationship. This theory then explains the conflict aspect between Pentecostalism and the Shona people in Zimbabwe.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Indigenous Practices

African Traditional Religion (ATR), according to Ebere (2011: 480-495) are the indigenous rituals, customs, beliefs, practices and ceremonies of Africans created out of the expression and profound consideration of their fore-bearers and having developed over thousands of years. ATR has its practices and systems that have also evolved over time.

Indigenous people have a rich cultural heritage which boasts of the following amongst others: strict recognition and adherence to the marriage rites and close family networks, adherence to social and cultural rites like *bira* (ancestral dance ceremonies), *kuripa* (compensation), *kurova guva* (appeasement of the dead), *roora* (marriage), and *rufu* (death) (Dodo, 2015: 47). The early indigenous people believed that proper adherence to these and several other rites helped to build cordial relations with both the ancestors and the living 'others'. Though the processes that were followed during the rituals were not written for consistency, the elderly leaders could still follow the expected procedures and this helped to nurture the relationships in society.

Over time, indigenous communities managed their social, political, economic, religious and cultural systems in a manner that sustained their livelihoods. Without any foreign religions, they prayed to God whom they called *Musikavanhu* (creator of mankind). They accessed God through their ancestral structures (Chigwata, 2014:69-90).

Conflict resolution and other traditional practices common before the introduction of foreign religions especially Pentecostalism were largely guided by the spirit mediums and soothsayers and to some extent by the community elders who would then consult with their village councils and spouses (Gyekye, 1996 and Bujo, 1998). There were beliefs in those communities that the dead had some powers to oversee what was happening in the families and villages from wherever they were living. The power of ancestral spirits and the dead could also be seen when the spirits dictated pace on how life could be lived (Dodo, 2013: 29-44). It must be realized that with the coming of the Europeans, there was massive development and industrialization which required people to work and be able to pay their taxes. In defiance, beginning 1912-13, traditional leaders

commandeered the observance of a holy day commonly called 'chisi', stop selling their grain and stop purchasing of foreign tradable goods (Dodo, forthcoming).

There were various forms of traditional rituals that were conducted in the early societies of the now-Zimbabwe whose purpose were among others, to pacify anger and hostility amongst community members, revitalize relationships with the ancestral spirits, appease the spirits of the other parties in a conflict, compensate the aggrieved families and the deceased's spirits, acknowledge the good facilitated by the ancestors and to maintain good relations with the gods (Boulding, 2001: 67-70 and Dodo, 2015: 47).

3.2 Roles of Religion in Zimbabwe

Roles of religions have been generalized without looking at specific circumstances. It has been this generalisation which created conflicts as a result of failure to recognise the parties involved the nature of relationship and need, the expected output versus available resources and the sincerity of the part played. There are however instances when religious (Pentecost) roles are over stated while in others, they are downplayed.

In the case of Zimbabwean churches in general, they encourage the use of negotiation as a way of transformation and resolving differences in various arenas. This is evidenced by their interventions in different conflict cases. Churches have also spoken out against violence, abuses of human rights, social injustice and poverty. Development work and peacebuilding have also been a critical aspect of the churches in Zimbabwe since the pre-colonial era. It was the Catholic that facilitated talks between the warring parties during the liberation war of the 1970s in Zimbabwe while apostolic churches supported by providing motivational prayers (Bhebe, 1979, Mudenge, 1986 and Dodo et al, 2014: 1-14). Similarly, the governance crisis that was experienced in Zimbabwe in 2017 culminating into a coup was mediated by churches led by the Catholics.

According to Ekeke (2011) and Matiore (2011), different religions in various communities play distinct roles depending on their capacity and the amount of respect that they enjoy in the communities. Depending on the forms of challenges prevailing in respective communities, religions move in with different solutions. In the case of Zimbabwe, apostolic churches have always offered Christian based traditional prescriptions while Pentecostals focus on the financial aspect of the peoples' challenges. On the other hand, ATR addresses the same challenges from an ancestral perspective closely relating people's problems to their historical and family backgrounds. All these interventions provide invaluable relief to the concerned communities (Ekeke, 2011:1-18).

3.3 The Demise of Indigenous Systems

During the early 1840s, the first groups of potential colonialists entered into the now Zimbabwe and conquered the two nations; the Shona and the Ndebele subsequently subjecting them under their authority and rule. To ensure that their plan was effective, they focused towards the erosion of the traditional leadership role and powers and their religious practices. This was to some extent achieved by replacing the original and defiant leaders with allegiant and loyal ones (Dodo, 2013:29-44 and Chigwata, 2014:69-90). In some cases, those who would have been removed were executed as a way of sending fear to other would-be transgressors and defiant leaders. Gradually, traditional leaders were left redundant, only playing a suppressive role for the colonialist and missionary Europeans (Dodo, forthcoming).

The once traditional leaders and practices, according to Keulder (1997) were now defined by modernity and education, before abandoning their traditional religions for Pentecostalism. Some of the leaders now speak in foreign languages. The influence of Pentecostalism on the local traditions is that when the Europeans and Christian missionaries came to Zimbabwe, in order for them to be easily absorbed and accepted by the local people, they accepted to adopt indigenous practices and names. To ensure total compliance with European and Christian requirements, according to Moyana (1984), some laws were enacted like the Reserves Act in 1903; Immorality Suppression Ordinance of 1903; Native Affairs Act of 1927; Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the Tribal Courts Act of 1969 amongst others which strictly regulated indigenous people's practices, activities, settlement systems and powers. Resultantly, most of the indigenous systems were now associated with evil practices while everyone who chose to align with Christianity was labeled civilized and elevated into leadership structures (Teffo, 2006).

4. Affected Institutions

The coming of foreign religions in general and Pentecostalism in particular, like it has been pointed out by various scholars (such as Dodo, Mudenge, Bourdillon, Gelfand, Bujo, Keulder, Moyana and Bhebe) had serious implications recorded in all the facets – religious, social, economic and political. While some of the changes were developmental and progressive, others were unfortunately retrogressive and corrosive to indigenous practices (Brock, 2005). Some of the practices and institutions that have been affected are discussed below.

4.1 Marriage

According to Chireshe (2012: 49-53), marriage within the Shona people is regarded as a two-family contract, the wife-giving family and the

wife-receiving family. This contract is expected to lead to the bearing of children for the sustenance of the family name. Since Shona society is patriarchal and hierarchical, the husband is the head of the family. Chireshe (2012: 49-53) indicates that according to Shona patriarchy, men benefit from what he calls 'the patriarchal dividend' as a result of which men in general benefit from the overall subservience of women.

What Pentecostalism has over the years influenced include the institution of marriage itself through its concepts around celibacy where some people do not marry trying to take after Jesus Christ who is reported to have died single. Pentecostalism has also helped condemn polygyny, a practice that traditionally helped create labour, security and in the advancement of the family name (Ekeke, 2011:1-18). These developments have also seen the general demise in marriages as people now see divorce as an acceptable and viable option once a marriage shakes.

4.2 Payment of lobola

The payment of *lobola* (*roora*) in the Shona culture is viewed positively as a reinforcement that binds families, as a consequence getting previously unrelated families into relationship. According to Gelfand (1999) and Chireshe (2012: 49-53), by tradition, *lobola* served to safeguard the rights of both men and women demonstrating a lifelong relationship. *Lobola* was a sign of respect for the woman and appreciation to her maiden's family. With Pentecostalism, the value in *lobola* was washed to the periphery as the new religion only prioritised weddings in holy matrimony. In the modern day Zimbabwe, some of these Pentecostalism weddings emphasise pomp and luxuries which have long-term effects on the families should any of the involved families fail to stand to the occasion.

4.3 Divorce

This is a process of separation by married people. In the olden Shona times, it was taboo for couples to break up as there were various mechanisms of attending to family and couple conflicts. First and foremost, the uncle-aunt concept did invaluable help resolve marriage challenges in most situations. Modernity and globalisation-induced migration have contributed to the demise of the uncle-aunt concept. Pentecostalism supported by modernity (Kitson 1992) has also influenced divorces through the promotion of commercial preaching of the gospel and migration practices.

Divorce has allowed women to exercise one of the long withdrawn right of participating in decision making especially in the home. Where women were previously not allowed space to contribute, they can choose to divorce for more liberal partners or simply follow a single-parent life where they make decisions about their lives and careers (Mangena and Ndlovu, 2013: 472-481).

4.4 Family system

Closely akin to marriage is the family system, which traditionally kept people together, facilitated cooperation, eased trade and development and helped raise children. The family is the main agent of socialization wherein children are exposed to social customs and ideals, particularly how they are expected to conduct themselves (Kethusegile et al, 2000). With the gradual collapse of marriage practices, the demise of family systems is inevitable. This then points to a society without any foundation for morals and ethical behaviour.

In Zimbabwe, the collapse of family system has bred a challenge of street people and vagrants. Basically, the traditional social safety net has been eroded leading to more poverty and hunger. In the same vein, Pentecostalism has eroded a culture of family joint planning in both social and economic matters. Traditionally, a couple could consult each other in the bedroom privately before the husband announced the plan as his. This approach to planning and decision-making restored the husband's integrity while leaving the wife satisfied (Chigwata, 2014:69-90).

4.5 Cultural rites

The Shona people had their cultural practices that served to regulate their lives and issues to do with conservation. To achieve this management system, there was a social hierarchy that controlled communities. At the top most was the king or Chief with the family head at the lowest level of the ladder. It was through this societal hierarchy that land was distributed and managed, cultural obligations fulfilled and sacred days maintained in honour of the ancestors (Dodo, 2013:19-30).

The spirit medium institution within the Shona people has seriously suffered a heavy blow from Pentecostalism, whose principles define the Shona spirit world as satanic. Resultantly, most people, by virtue of their membership and allegiance to Pentecostalism, are shunning the practice despite having served the people well for thousands of years (Muchabaiwa et al, 2010). Pentecostalism and apostolicism have managed to transform traditional spirits into Christian spirits with prophetic powers. Cases of traditional healers and spirit mediums who converted to Christianity include prophet Boniface Muponda who converted to a traditional healer and traditional healer Michael Micho who later became a prominent prophet.

What has been observed in Zimbabwe's Pentecostal and apostolic religions in relation to African Traditional Religion is a very close relationship where one practice influences another. It has been noted that if one is a traditional healer courtesy of some spiritual powers, if he/she joins apostolic or Pentecostal churches, the same spiritual powers may manifest as prophetic powers and the reverse also applies. From an extensive analysis of these religious spirits, a spirit called *svikiro* (medium)

in ATR transforms into a policy interpreting prophet while a spirit known as *n'anga* (*godobori*) becomes a healing prophet in Christianity respectively.

4.6 Witchcraft

The practice of witchcraft has also either gone underground or modified the tradecraft to keep away from Pentecostal practices and detection. Traditionally, witchcraft served basically two broad roles; punishing other members of the society and inflicting harm on others. Recorded history seems to give prominence to the negative side and ignore the fact that it helped eliminate social outcasts by way of causing mysterious deaths (Matiure, 2011:29-40). From a progressive perspective, death and murder may be some ways of resolving conflicts since they help eliminate some personalities that may be stirring controversy and conflicts in society. From a biblical stand-point, David killed Goliath as a way of getting rid a cruel and bullish strong fighter.

It is argued by Brock (2005) that belief in witchcraft disappears as Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe continues to grow and the Shona people get more educated. Brock argues that there are some foreign religions that can gradually affect the existence of others in society through dynamism and ushering meaningful change and development. However McVeigh (1974) and Gehman (2001) argue that witchcraft activities are on the increase despite education and the existence of Pentecostalism.

4.7 Erosion of *totemism*

Totemic animals have mythical and religious significance. Since time immemorial, the Shona believed in *totemism*, a practice whereby particular groups of people were identified with particular wild animals. This practice helped in the conservation of wildlife as people would not eat an animal of their totem (Dodo, 2015:29). When Pentecostalism was introduced to the Shona people, it was indicated that the practice was satanic and bad. Though it has not completely died down, there is now less of the recognition and adherence to the practice. This has also impacted on the identity of communities and conservation of wildlife.

4.8 Indigenous conflict resolution practices

Indigenous conflict resolution systems that have for centuries defined the Shona people have also been adversely affected with some getting modified while others losing relevance. Some of the approaches that have suffered after the coming of Pentecostalism include; *dare* (court system), *jakwara* (communal task ceremonies), and *bira* (ancestral dance ceremonies), *kuripa* (compensation), *kurova guva* (appeasement of the dead), *ndari* (traditional brew), *ngano* (story-telling), *nhaurirano* (negotiation), and *pfonda* (dance ceremonies), *roora* (marriage), *rufu* (death), and *zviera* (taboo). Others are; *kutengeserana* (economic cooperation), *chipari chematunhu akasiyana* (extended matrimonial

alliances), *chipari* (polygyny), inter-clan marriage (exogamy), *kupika* (oath-taking) and *kupira* (sacrifices). There are also *kuzvidzwa* (ostracization), *mhiko dzinoera* (religious rites), *rudo* (love), *ruregerero* (forgiveness) and *kubvumirana pachimwe* (collective approach in decision making) (Dodo, 2015: 54) amongst others.

However, what Pentecostalism has not been able to neutralize is the concept of avenging spirits (*ngozi*) as argued by the clash of civilisation theory, especially following the murder of an innocent person. The Shona culture clearly spells out that if a person is murdered, the deceased's spirit returns from the dead to avenge by persecuting the extended family so that collectively, they seek compensation for the crime. According to Gehman (2001), the concept of avenging spirits in the Shona is still far from over despite some practices that are feared could out-rightly erode its value. Some of the noted practices include: conducting prayers at grave-sites, burying people of different cultures in the same cemetery and inscribing Christian symbols like crosses on the Shona graves among others.

4.9 Relevance of names

There has been a gradual shift in the naming of Shona children since the advent of Pentecostalism. Traditionally, indigenous names transmitted important messages and preserved vital practices and incidences in particular families. With the coming of Pentecostalism, indigenous names began to be associated with Satanism and the dead. Because of social pressures in the new communities especially in urban areas, people have shifted their focus on a totally different set of names as a way of pleasing the new religion and movement of change as argued in the social dominance theory. Either children are given western names or get indigenous names ending with *christianised* elements as the following;

Ngoni	Ngonidzashe
Tapiwa	Tapiwanashe
Anna	Annashe
Takudzwa	Takudzwanashe

The italicized part of the names is veneration to God.

4.10 Procreation

Reproduction is the primary objective of marriage (Masuku, 2005). In Shona, marriage is taken to be complete after the woman has borne at least one child consequently endorsing the marriage agreement between her family and that of the husband. Procreation boosts the clan of the husband through carrying the name of the family to posterity. However, with Christianity, celibacy encourages people not to marry and have children. Pentecostalism supported by modernity also encourages families to bear the number of children that they can look after. Resultantly, the

number of children has drastically reduced thereby threatening potential labour and security personnel.

4.11 Destruction of nature

On the destruction and management of nature, Mvududu (1996: 151) argues that the advent of Pentecostalism and various other western philosophies and practices have been the cause of the collapse of indigenous attitudes to nature. In the olden days, the Shona people conserved flora and fauna through the concepts of taboos and *totemism*, effective regulatory systems which had long term implications on the people's livelihoods (Dodo, 2013: 29-44 and Chigwata, 2014:69-90). However, with the coming of Pentecostalism, some of these traditional concepts were condemned and de-mystified thus exposing nature to destruction.

4.12 Demise of languages

The coming of Europeans in the 1830s, as posited by the social dominance theory, ushered in a concoction of new policies, approaches to life and an effective education system which saw most communities abandoning their traditional practices if they were to remain relevant. The new religion and its education system required that communities adopted a completely new and alien approach thereby gradually forgetting indigenous systems. The abandonment of indigenous practices, adoption of new and merging the old and new brought what is now referred to as endogenous practices. Knowledge and expertise in European languages and religion naturally placed one in a superior position socially, religiously and economically. Therefore, there was a marked rush towards European practices. The abandonment of indigenous languages implied losing identity and self-worth, losing source of power and important markers of culture.

As a result of indigenous people moving away from their practices, there were language and cultural casualties (Pfukwa, 2001:25-36). The Tsoro-otso San people found in Tsholotsho, Zimbabwe and their language (Tshwao) are extinct. Tshwao language has never been formally written and no one is able to read and write it. Similarly, the Doma people in Kanyemba, are also extinct as they have gradually moved into towns assuming new identities, religions and cultures. Other minority languages that are facing the threat of extinction include Ndau, Nambya, Kalanga and Sotho while Chiungwe, Chibarwe, Budya and Korekore are also non-existent, as there is not even literature for record and continuity purpose.

5. Institutions that benefitted

5.1 Property rights and inheritance

Traditionally, family belongings are the man's property (Gelfand 1999). Under traditional Shona law, a woman's income belongs to the husband thus taking control. According to Kambarami (2006), in traditional Shona society, women have restricted inheritance rights as this is a privilege of men. Similarly, when a husband dies, the widow is required to marry one of the close relations of the departed, whose non-compliance makes her susceptible to eviction from her matrimonial home and leave children behind. However, with Pentecostalism, this practice was condemned as it tried to address the plight of widows. In Zimbabwe, this protection mechanism has been enshrined in the constitution through the Deceased Persons Family Maintenance (Amendment) Act and the Domestic Violence Act S3 (1) (GoZ, 2015).

5.2 Education

The introduction of Pentecostalism in the Shona communities was a welcome move especially as it ushered in western education. It was around the 1890s that the European Christians established early formal schools around the country in an endeavor to win the hearts and minds of the indigenous people (Atkinson, 1974). Since the establishment of formal schools in Rhodesia now Zimbabwe, by 1919 there were 39381 pupils in the schools with a total of 696 schools across the country. This marked the genesis of civilisation and development of the local people culminating into their realisation of the bondage that defined their lifestyles.

5.3 Civilisation and development

Besides helping indigenous people to read the bible, education also played preventative, protective, and transformative roles on the ground. Education has also helped people to appreciate their identities, their formation, their capabilities and weaknesses and the relationships that they share with their neighbours (Teffo, 2006). All the other aspects around civilisation and development are anchored on the right and relevant education.

Though the Shona had their systems of resolving conflicts, the coming of Pentecostalism exposed the locals to other exogenous practices, whose fusion helped to produce more effective, adaptive and efficient endogenous conflict resolution systems. It must also be viewed from a background where an illiterate people tend to be more violent than the literate. Therefore, it has been education that has brought civilisation subsequently ushering peace and development (Muchabaiwa et al, 2010).

6. Discussion

It is this study's acknowledgement that indigenous cultures and systems have been eroded by the advent of foreign religions because most changes during the colonial era were packaged in Pentecostalism capitalising on its power to persuade. However, while Pentecostalism has contributed to the demise of indigenous practices, there are also other contributing factors like legal and political. There are however other areas that have benefitted from Pentecostalism.

The government and various other concerned stakeholders have realized the impact of the coming of other religions accompanied by colonialism on local practices and traditions. As a last minute measure of rescuing the situation, the Zimbabwean constitution has provisions focused on the affected areas. Section 3 (d) of the Constitution makes particular reference to the respect of the ideals and principles of diversity of culture and traditional values as the founding principles while Section 3(2)(i)(i) focuses on the rights of racial, cultural, Ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. The same constitution [S18 (1) and (2) and S63] identifies and recognises 16 languages as the official ones (GoZ, 2015). While there may be efforts to save indigenous practices, given the effects of globalisation, it may be difficult to rescue as the remaining practices are also gradually breaking down. It is a question of time before all previously indigenous systems are modeled in a European manner like funeral rites, appeasement of the dead, traditional dance rituals and family models amongst others.

The study has also established that the existence of various religions is to a large extent, health for the development of the people as they will be competing for relevance and recognition. It was established that while there were several social, political and economic institutions that were eroded, there were equally some that benefitted from the religions. It has to be noted that Christianity brought a number of new and foreign practices that to a great extent, improved some of the indigenous approaches. Resultantly, some of the newly generated endogenous approaches were of high quality.

The study also established that the clashes that defined the interaction of various religions also saw the creation of new systems including names. It has been noted that the fusion of these religions led to the generation of new and time-relevant names. However, the names have a bias towards Pentecostalism and trying to erode all that are founded on traditional practices. The clashes and conflicts fueled by these religions are to a great extent, necessary for development, civilisation and dynamism of cultures.

7. Recommendations

The study recommends a variety of initiatives and programmes that are expected to improve inter-religious relations and ensure sustainable co-existence in the spirit of peace and development in Zimbabwe. The study acknowledging that indigenous cultures and systems have been eroded by the advent of foreign religions that use financial and material resources as bait, recommends that there be a deliberate documentation programme especially from the junior school side. It is expected that documentation and archiving of some of the eroded practices will help preserve them for future reference. The study also recommends that some of the practices be fused into the elementary school curriculum so that pupils appreciate them.

Realising that the Zimbabwean constitution has provisions focused on the affected areas, especially Section 3, the study recommends that there be a serious initiative from a constitutional side to ensure that no religion looks down upon another. This is in view of the fact that constitutionally, Zimbabwe is a secular state where all religions are equally.

Resuscitating all the indigenous practices may not be possible given the prevailing political, social, economic and religious trends; what may be necessary is to document for reference purpose and where possible ensure that indigenous people at least practice their systems for continuity sake. In communities that still follow traditional systems, it is recommended that participation of the young generation be prioritised for continuity purpose. Out-rightly condemning the advent of Pentecostalism and other religions for the demise of indigenous systems may not be wholly accurate given the existence of several other factors as alluded above.

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