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Readings in the  
Prevention of  
**Cultism**  
and other  
**Social Vices**  
in Nigerian Institutions  
of Higher Learning

edited by  
*S. A. Abdullahi, M. A. Kazaure*



*Readings in the Prevention of Cultism and Other  
Social Vices in Nigerian Institutions of Higher  
Learning.*

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*Preface*

The establishment of Yaba Higher College in the early 1930's marked the beginning of higher technical education in Nigeria. Today, there are over 160 technical and technological institutions of learning in the country owned by Federal and States Governments. These institutions aimed to address among others, achieving the goals of high level technical manpower training, inculcating good values for the survival of individual and Nigerian nation, promoting and supporting scholarship and community service. The role these institutions are performing in the national development has been vastly documented, as such no need to go into it further here.

Cult, a confraternity organization introduced in University of Ibadan in the early 1950s with some clearly defined goals has today become one of the main source of extortion, terror, insecurity and all sort of aberrant activities one can think of in Nigerian higher institutions' communities. Despite the institutions efforts to check their activities through disciplinary measures like dismissal and rustication the number of campus cults and cultism activities seem on the increase. This state of affairs is a source of worry to the parents, institutions' administration and the Government. It is in line of this, Hussaini Adamu Federal Polytechnic Kazaure organized a seminar to educate its community members (Staff and Students) on prevention of cultism and other social vices with a view to understanding the problems: why they exist and how do they operate and the role the community is supposed to play in order to prevent cultism and other social vices in the Hussaini Adamu Federal Polytechnic Kazaure community and indeed other higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. The nine papers



presented at the seminar are compiled in this book: Readings in the Prevention of Cultism and Other Social Vices in Nigerian Institutions of Higher Learning

The book identify the social vices existing in these institutions, their causes and community based solutions to them including the security recipe cultism opportunity reduction. The contributions are seasoned academics with research and administrative experience from different higher institutions of learning in Nigeria.

I recommend this book to lecturers, students and Administrators of institutions of higher learning as well as the general public in and outside Nigeria

*Engr. Dr. Nuru Yakubu OON, FNIM*  
Executive Secretary, NBTE

July, 2008

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*From Secret Societies  
to Collegiate Cultism:  
Facts from History*

**B. Salawu and D.S. Adekeye**



## Introduction

In human history, all societies are replete with whispers or traces of secret societies. In historical records for examples, there are accounts of elders or priests who guarded the forbidden knowledge of ancient peoples and prominent men, meeting in secret to direct the course of civilization (Cooper, 2008). There are also evidences from the works of great philosophers that indicate the existence of secret societies in human history. For instance, Plato's writings are full of information on the 'Mysteries'. Also, Hall (cited in Cooper, 2008) stated "...the illuminated of antiquity... entered its (Pyramid of Giza) portals as men, they came forth as 'gods'. In the same book, mention was made of the ancient Egyptians word for pyramid which is Khuti, and which meant 'glorious light'. The pyramids was also talked about as the great Egyptians temples of initiation. We also find in history The Knights Templar that were founded sometime during the 11th Century in Jerusalem by the Prieure de Sion with the express purpose of guarding the remaining relics of Jesus and to provide military protection for the religious travelers during their pilgrimage to the Holy City. It is important to know that the Prieure de Sion was a religious order founded upon Mount Zion in Jerusalem. According to Cooper (2008) the order set for itself the target of preserving and recording the bloodline of Jesus and the House of David through every means available to them.

It is note worthy that the oldest of such secret societies that have ever existed in the history of the world is the

Brotherhood of the Snake, which is known elsewhere as the Brotherhood of the Dragon. It is instructive to mention that this particular secret society still exists today under many names and guises along many others. These others includes: The Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, simple known as the Shrine (AANONMS); Arctic Brotherhood (AB); American Brotherhood (AB); Ancient Order of Sanhedrins (AOS); Ancient Order of Zuzimites (AOZ); Brotherhood of the New Life (BNL); Benevolent Order of Monkeys (BOM) Dames of Malta (DOM); and Fraternal Order of Beavers (FOB). There are many more of these secret societies, fraternal orders and fraternal organizations listed in Genealogy Research: Complete List of Fraternal Organizations: A – L and M – Z. Some of these fraternal orders are male dominated while some others are female dominated or purely female or male.

Although most of these groups listed in the Genealogical Research no longer exist, they provide us with the fact that secret societies are not new in history. They existed even in the antiquity the remotest of human history. The secret societies ever mentioned in history have many things in common. First and foremost, religion has always played a significant role in the course of these organizations. That is, communication with a higher source, often divine, is a familiar claim in all but a few of them. Secondly, the secrets of these groups are thought to be profound that only a chosen, well-educated few are able to understand and use them. That is the secrets are only known to the members who use their special knowledge for the benefit of all mankind (another



familiar claim among secret societies). Thirdly, in most if not all, primitive tribal societies all adults were usually members of these secret societies separated into male and female groups but usually the male dominate. It is interesting to know that in many civilized societies too, where these secret societies exist, similar pattern of operation subsists. Fourthly, in most societies, secret societies have been generally known to be working not against the established authority, but for it. Indeed, they could be seen as the established authority. Finally, in many societies where secret societies ever existed or still exist, they mirror many facets of ordinary life. One obvious thing about them is that they always exhibit exclusivity of membership while great importance is attached to being or becoming a member. According to Cooper (2008), the exclusivity of membership remains one of the secret societies' most powerful weapons and from where they consequently derive their powers. The exclusivity is strengthened by the use of signs, passwords and other tools.

In this chapter, the objective is to address the issue of the evolution of secret society to collegiate secret cults which have deviated from the initial noble objectives of positive intervention in the affairs of mankind, which characterized the former. In order to achieve this objective the remaining part of this chapter is divided into four key areas to discuss the conceptual issues, history of secret societies; evolution of secret societies to collegiate cultism; and the negative and positive side of secret organizations.

### **Conceptualizing Secret Societies and Collegiate Cults**

Secret society is a term used to describe a variety of organizations. Although the exact meaning of the term is disputed, several of the definitions advanced by academic scholars indicate a degree of secrecy and secret knowledge. According to Cooper (2008), the secrecy and secret knowledge of these secret societies are found to be profound that only the chosen one can really understand and use them. This secrecy entails denial of membership or knowledge of the group and possibly negative consequences for acknowledging membership, strong ties between member of the organization, and frequently rites or rituals which outsiders are generally not permitted to observe.

In another attempt at defining the term cult, Kolawole (1998) opined that the word cult is a concept which is derived from the Latin vocabulary, 'Cultus'. If this word is translated into modern Italian it becomes 'culto'. Kolawole observed that whether in its traditional form or modern form, it is a concept which refers to worship, religion or faith. By extension, a cult is a group of people who are adherents of a certain type of worship. If this is extended further, it can be a devotion to a craze for a reason (Kolawole, 1998). It is important to know that cults can be qualified as either open or secret depending on the way their activities are carried out or executed. Cult in whatever form it exists (open or secret) is usually viewed as highly individualistic, loosely organized, mystical and led by a charismatic leader, while the goal of the adherent is that of a purely personal ecstatic experience, salvation, comfort and mental or physical



healing (Oluwatilehin, 1998). Specifically, a secret cult is any form of organization whose activities, like those of the secret societies, are not only exclusively kept away from the knowledge of other but their types of activities are carried out at odd hours of the day, and they are at variant to the accepted norms and values of everyday life of the society which harbours such cult (Oluwatilehin, 1998 citing Ogunbameru, 1997). Like the secret societies defined above, secret cults too are secret to the extent that their membership, organizations, activities, rules and of course their modes of operation are unknown to non-members of the secret cults. Thus, like in the secret societies, during initiation secret cult are bound by oath of secrecy which every member observes religiously.

From the discussion of the two concepts-secret society and secret cult so far, it seems there is just a little difference between the two. In other words, the line of difference is so thin that hardly can one distinguish between the two. However, it is suffice to say here that while secret society is an organization whose activities are kept secret, out of public knowledge or consumption, mysterious organizations, which do not operate in the open and whose method is only known to members (Oluwatilehin, 1998), cult is system of religious belief and worship. As mentioned earlier, a cult becomes a secret society when its activities and operations are no longer conducted in the open and mysterious. This explains why many cults are secret societies of the traditional forms. Secret cults become collegiate when they exist or found in institutions of learning.

### **History of Secret Society, Secret Cults and Fraternity**

According to Cooper (2008), right from the beginning of recorded history as we have indirectly pointed out at the introductory part of this chapter, governmental bodies (Simple or complex) of every nation have been involved with maintaining the status quo in order to defend the establishment against minority groups that sought to function as states within states or at times attempt to oust the constituted authority and replace it. What this means is that right from the recorded history there have always been clandestine minority groups whose actives are shrouded in mysteries and nefarious activities which are detrimental to the constituted authorities. While this has always been the phenomenon, historical records have it that many of the attempts of these secret groups have succeeded but they have not always lasted.

The insatiable ambition of man to belong to groups (secret ones) is always born out of the desires to be one of the elects. This desire according to cooper is something no power on earth has been able to lessen, let alone completely destroy. What is instructive here is that this observation summarizes the genesis of secret societies. Indeed, it is said to be one of the 'top secrets' of secret societies – the onerous and insatiable desire by man to be one of the elects or one of the best or one of the most successful in a calling or one of the most knowledgeable etc depending on the individuals goals in life. To man therefore, right from the beginning of history, it is the secret society that gives him political base and lots of clout. Though this means, he thinks he can succeed in all human endeavours as it confers on him



extra-ordinary advantages which others who are not members do not enjoy. Thus, members of these secret societies often vote the same and give each other preference in daily business, legal, and social activities. Put in the language of Cooper (2008), it is the deepest desire of many to be able to say, 'I belong to the elect'.

From the background provided above and following the desire of man to be one of the elect, historical records exist that document the existence of 'houses of worship and sacrifice' in many ancient cities. These houses of worship and sacrifices were temples erected in honor of the many gods men worshipped in those days. These buildings functioned as meeting places for philosophers and mystics who had powers over nature and could control or manipulate it for whatever benefit or reason. Usually, there was a strong bond between these men as they believed in the same philosophy and belonged to the same religious groups (Cooper, 2008). In history therefore, many of such groups of men that were bounded together in exclusive philosophic and religious schools-called secret societies existed in the surface of the earth. As mentioned in the introductory part of this chapter, the most important of all these ancient groups called the secret societies is the Brotherhood of the Snake or Dragon, simply known as the mysteries. The Chinese secret society called the Green and the Red societies, also belong to the ancient secret society. Like the Brotherhood of the snake described above. According Makow (2007) it can be found in the history books where a vivid account of its origin has been given. Like the Snake, these Chinese secret societies have

steadily increased their influence throughout China and the rest of the world since 1949. Today they have members at the very highest levels of the Chinese government. They are by nature anti-establishment and are not an official of Chinese government organization (Makow, 2007). They draw their membership from the intellectuals such as University Professors, Researchers and Bureaucrats.

Equally in history, there are records that show the existence of secret societies in the ancient Greeks. In this part of the world, recorded history has it that meetings were held subrosa (Latin, 'under the rose'). This phrase arises from the fact that the rose was the emblem of the god Horus in ancient Egypt. Later the Greeks and Romans regarded Horus as god of silence. In Nigeria, especially among the ethnic groups of Southern Nigeria, and those of the other African regions like some countries in West Africa, East and Central Africa, secret societies similar to the ancient secret societies described above had existed and some of them are still existing (Oluwatilehin, 1998). Examples of such secret societies include: the Ekpe secret society among the Efik tribe, the Ogboni secret society among the Yoruba tribe of South Western of Nigeria; the Ekine secret society in the Eastern Delta State; the Poro Secret Society among the Mende of Liburia, and the Orim secret society in the Taroh cultural setting (Ogungbemi, 1998). Others that are found in this part of the world, include the Ozo and Ama secret societies among the Igbo speaking people (Oluwafoise, 1998).



From the presentation and the discussion thereon, we have been able to show that the coming together of people with similar thoughts and philosophies and/or ideas is not new in history. People have always come together for different purposes or objectives, which can be positive or negative. The operation of these various groups could be in the open or in secret. When it is the later we have seen that such groups become secret societies, which in the traditional societies were used to enhance the social, political and economic existence of members. The most powerful secret organization in the world is the Bilderberg Group, organized in 1952 and named after the hotel where its first meeting took place in 1954. The man who organized the Bilderberg Group, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, has the power to veto the vatican's choice of any Pope it elects.

Most of the greatest minds that ever lived were initiated into these ancient secret societies at-times by secret and dangerous rites, some of which have been described as cruel. For example, in the Society of Mysteries mentioned earlier, some of the famous rites were known as Osiris, Isis, Sabazius and Eleusis (Cooper, 2008:4). He identified Plato as one of these initiates, who reflected on some of the activities and mysteries of the Brotherhood of Snake in his writings. If by our understanding thus far, secret societies and their activities are always known in the history of mankind, the question that naturally follows from this understanding is how and when did collegiate cultism emerge in our society?

### **The Emergence of Collegiate Secret Cults in Nigeria**

As we have seen in the last section of this chapter, secret society is not a new phenomenon in the world history and also in the history of Nigeria. These secret societies have existed for different reasons and purposes. Majorly, they came into existence for political, economic, social, and religious reasons (Ogunade, 2002 and Ogungbemi, 1998). Apart from these traditional secret societies many student's societies are now existing on the University campuses in parts of the world. Examples of secret cults are the secret societies established on the University campuses in the United States of America. These are collegiate secret societies like the Flat Hat Club (1750) and Phi Beta Kappa (1776) both founded at William and Mary. The United States National Security Agency has also been described as a secret society. This is because for many years its very existence was a secret as was its budget. One of the famous members of the FHC was Thomas Jefferson, who was the third President of the United States. There is also another one called the Skull and Bones club, of which both Presidents George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry are said to be members from their college years.

In Nigeria, there are so many collegiate secret societies popularly known as secret cults. These cults are like reinventing the socio-cultural, political and economic life of the past as they look and operate more or less like the secret associations of the traditional societies. Ten years ago, Kolawole (1998) observed that there about forty secret societies (secret cults) in tertiary institutions in



Nigeria. Oje (2005) on his own put the number of collegiate cults in Nigeria at fifty-nine. The figure may be higher. Some of them are: the pioneer confraternity known as the Pyrates, Buccaneers, Black Axe, K.KK, Ozo, Vikings, Panama, Black Cat, Eiye Confraternity, Mafia, Black Beret, Dragon, Frigates, Himalayas, Canary, Pirate, Walrus, Barracudas Amazons (all female) and Marpiates. Others are the Trojan Horse, the Mgba-Mgba, the Red Devils, Blood Sport and the Temple of Eden etc (Oluwafoise, 1998; Ojo, 2005).

There is a consensus of opinions on the origin and initial objectives or aims of collegiate secret societies (cults) in Nigeria. The history of secret societies in the Nigerian tertiary institutions can be traced to the founding of a Pirate confraternity by Wole Soyinka at the University College, Ibadan in the early 50's (Kolawole, 1998; Ogunade, 1998 Ipaye, 1998). The Pirate according to Ipaye was established in like with other secret cults tradition which includes shaking off the yoke of colonial mentality, asserting, the identity of true independence and instilling University culture into all cult members. These were laudable roles which the first collegiate confraternity played in the early 1950s. They are positives roles that can be likened to the positive contributions made to the society by some traditional secret societies the world over. Interestingly however, when other collegiate secret cults emerged, the traditional objectives for which the Pirate confraternity was known started to change. Consequently their operations, activities, organizations and what they stand for also changed with time. As shown by the slogans of

some of them, the collegiate cults as they exist in Nigeria deviate from the slogans of the traditional secret societies. The former have slogans such as 'no friend, no foe', 'no bribe, no pay'; 'blood for blood'; kill and quench', 'no friend, no brother', to mention but a few. These are slogans which indicate violence in their entirety, to mention but a few. Therefore, rather than helping the society or community to which they belong, they instill fear into people and make life miserable for their victims.

Many reasons have been advanced for the alarming growth rate of collegiate cults in Nigeria. Among the reasons often mentioned are the human nature to worship a true God or a deity (Oje, 2005); the human want to search for respect, recognition, protection, approval and sense of belonging; the desire to have avenue to show and diffuse frustration; quest for transcendence, quest for importance and quest for acceptance in the community (Folarin cited in Oje, 2005). Other reasons advanced by other scholars include the desire to create an atmosphere of power and protection, the desire to have fame (Ogunade, 2002), and the need for common bond of union, solidarity for personality development and the desire to be an authority to be reckoned with (Oluwafoise, 1998). A number of reasons have been advanced for the evolution of collegiate cults in the Nigerian society. Among such reasons are: the cultivation of material consciousness through military rulership of the country; harsh and hopeless economic conditions suffered by the Nigerian parents and particularly students in higher



institutions in the 1980s and the infiltration and suppression or lack of democratic and independent virile unions in our tertiary institution. Just like the secret societies of the antiquity, membership of collegiate cults includes many prominent members of our societies. These prominent citizens provide the necessary support which these cults need to operate. They (the collegiate cults) are sustained by the finances of these prominent citizens.

### **The Positive and Negative Sides of Secret Societies and Collegiate Cultism in Historical Perspective**

Historically, secret societies, fraternal organizations and collegiate cults have always been the subject of suspicion and speculation since the time of the ancient Greeks. This was the time, as indicated earlier, when meetings were being held subrosa. To this extent, opinions about the consequences of secret societies of any sort vary. For example, Robinson wrote *Proofs of a Conspiracy* in 1798. He said:

*Nothing is as dangerous as a mystic association. The object remaining a secret in the hands of the managers, the rest simply put a ring in their own noses by which they may be led about at pleasure; and still panting after the secret they are the better pleased the less they see of their way. A mystical object enables the leader to shift his ground as he pleases, and to accommodate him to every current fashion or prejudice. This again gives him almost unlimited power; for he can make use of these prejudices to lead men by troops... (Cited in Cooper; 2008:18).*

The above quoted passage really reveals the negative side of secret societies in the best way possible. It shows that secret societies anywhere they existed or still existing remain the instrument which the minority use to dominate the majority. This is because of the aura of fear which normally surrounds their activities and operations. The secret knowledge which they possess gives them an advantage over others as members of the secret societies or cults are considered to have the ability to communicate with the extra-ordinary being. This explains why members of secret societies of the antiquity believed that there are but few truly mature minds in the world. They believed that those mature minds belong exclusively to them. Therefore, they believed that the initiated elect communicate directly to gods (Alliens) who communicate back to them... 'The elect are given knowledge of the mysteries and are illuminated and thus know as the Illuminate ones, the guardians of the secrets of the Ages'.

Historically, at one time or the other secret societies planned to overthrow the constituted authorities in many nations. They attempted to become states within states. We have been told that many of these attempts have succeeded but have not always lasted. For instance, the major tenets of Roshaniya - an ancient secret society were: 'the abolition of private property; the elimination of religion; the elimination of nation states, the belief that illumination emanated from the supreme being who desired a class of perfect men and women to execute the organization and direction of the world;



belief in a plan to reshape the social system of the world by first taking control of individual countries one by one' (Cooper, 2008).

Some secret societies also have the goal of ruling the world. This is particularly true of the most modern secret societies. These modern secret societies are really one society with one purpose, which is to rule the world.

### Summary

From the presentation so far, it can be concluded that secret societies of which cultism is one have been a subject of discourse since the beginning of human history by different people the world over, in this chapter, we have been able to show that secret societies abound everywhere in the world and they exist in many forms and shapes. What this means is that, secret societies are a universal phenomenon that exist for many reasons and purposes generally, we have seen that secret societies have both positive and negative sides. In particular, while the secret societies evolved out of the singular need to curb criminal acts and some negative behaviour within their traditional societies and even in modern societies. In the past, these secret societies have also be shown to serve as checks and balances in the communities or societies in which they existed indeed, we have been able to show that the secret societies of antiquity perform some political, religious and socio-economic functions in their societies. They served as the guardian and custodian of secret knowledge and the policemen of public moral in some instances. All these cannot be said of the collegiate cults even though they

usually started with positive intensions. This is to say that the collegiate cults that now dominate the educational communities in the modern society have deviated from the positive roles of the secret societies of the early times. At best, they epitomize destruction of life and property, shedding of innocent blood, creating sense of insecurity, some of them engaging in armed robbery and threat to national stability and development.



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