

Literature and Myth: Camara Laye's Example

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Abstract- *In this article, myth is discussed as a literary concept. Mythological issues like the effects of names and the dates of birth on Camara Laye were explained by the help of Cavendish's theory of numerology. The article also presented totems as one of the elements that we must respect for our well being. In this paper, the opinion of Abimbola (1977) that each and every living soul was born with a totem, a phenomenon that must be respected as revealed in the novels of Camara Laye. It is also discovered that there are supernatural powers that control the natural. The ancestors were partly seen as omnipresent- those whose spirits could be invoked for protection and provision anywhere any-time. At the concluding part, every individual is urged to know his/ her position in the supernatural. This would help everyone to pray for the desirable position as regards his/her destiny and reject every undesirable future occurrence through prayer.*

Key words: Literature, Myth, Novel, Totem

INTRODUCTION

The word 'literature' is a compression of the French imperative statement *Lis tes ratures!* which means *Read your deletions!* in English language? Two elements are important in this statement: *Read and deletions.* This implies that even what one has written and probably later deleted still have literary values. In other words, both obsolete and new ideas are still relevant in literary studies. Today, there are findings of the relationship between literature and medicine, literature and religion, literature and language, literature and science etc. This implies that literature is connected directly or indirectly with all human endeavors. The focus of this article is to explain the relationship between literature and myth as reflected in Camara Laye's novels.

Literary scholars for instance Levi-Strauss (1966) and Adeagbo (A) (2014) describe myth as a literary concept. Adeagbo (A) (2014) explains that metaphysics is a literary element that relates to myth. It is per-

inent to explain what myth is. In the words of Culler (2002) and Chandler (2002) myth is a semiotics concept. Precisely, it is the third order of signification. To them, denotative and connotative meanings are discussed respectively in the first and second orders of signification. Lyons (1977) defines denotation as the term being used to indicate the class of persons, things etc. He draws a marked difference between denotation and reference. To him, reference is used to refer to the actual persons and things being referred. This means dog denotes the class of all dogs while that dog or Bingo refers to a particular dog in the context of its usage. Palmer (1996) explains that the connotative meanings are emotive. They help in creating subtle ways of saying whether something is good or bad or even of choosing good or bad word. Palmer (1996) advances examples like politician and statesman, hide and conceal, liberty and freedom to connote approval or disapproval respectively. This refers to the second order of signification.

As we have earlier said, myth is the third order of signification. Roland Barthes (1986) describes myth as a phenomenon that is closely linked with connotation. He explains further that it is associated with classical fables about the exploits of gods and heroes. To him, the orders of signification called denotation and connotation are united to produce ideology. O'Sullivan et al (1994) and, Fiske and Harley (1994) describe this phenomenon as the third order of signification- myth

Chandler (2002) sees the popular usage of the word myth as beliefs that are false. He further explains that its semiotic usage presents it as an extended metaphor. In a simple language, cultural elements like attitudes, history and cultural beliefs which become a reflection of the ways of things in a given culture are mythological elements that require metaphysical explanations for they sometimes contain beliefs that go beyond the physical and human reasoning. These elements are beyond human imagination for they are controlled by the supernatural.

At this juncture, it is necessary to explain the meaning of the adjective metaphysical. The prefix meta means ‘after’. So metaphysical literally means after the physical. Metaphysics is a noun from this adjective. It is a branch of philosophy which deals with questions that science cannot answer. It questions and explains the nature of reality.

In this article, we are set to examine mythological concepts like the name, the date of birth and the fortune, the totem and its possessor, the belief in the spirit and the supernatural power and the belief in the dead as they reflect on Camara Laye’s literary thoughts in his novels: *L’enfant noir*, *le regard du roi* and *Dramouss* translated respectively as *The African Child*, *The Radiance of the King* and *A Dream of Africa*. The original texts (the French versions) will be used for this study and we shall translate all the citations from these texts to English language.

The Biography of Camara Laye

Camara Laye was born at Kouroussa, a village in Upper Guinee on the 1st January 1928. After his primary education in French primary school, he left for Conakry the capital of Guinea to further his studies. He holds professional aptitude certificate of mechanics.

He tried his utmost to become an Engineer in France. It was in 1953 when he was passing through a period of disarray that he published *L’enfant noir* (*The African Child*) his first novel and a year later he published *Le regard du roi*. (*The Radiance of the King*).

In 1956, when Guinea was planning to become independent, he returned to Conakry. He was there till 1963. He held some important ministerial posts before leaving for Senegal in 1966 on self exile as a result of his criticism of Sekou Toure’s dictatorial regime which he did in *Dramouss* (*A Dream of Africa*).

While in Senegal, Camara Laye did not have any aided hand because his wife (Marie) was sent to seven years imprisonment for the offence committed by the husband. As a result, he had to fend for himself and his seven children. At the same time, he married Ramatoulaye Kanté. The marriage was blessed with three other children. Marie divorced her husband after leaving the prison. Camara Laye died in 1980 after a protracted illness.

Name, Date of Birth and Fortune

Cavendish (1971) believes that the names we bear have to do with what we are and what happens to us in life. He observes that the secrets of the universe are packed in the Hebrew alphabet. Based on this, he es-

tablished a table through which one can analyze one’s character and destiny. This method underlines the fact that the letters of a name contain the essential truth about a person and determine the destiny.

According to him, one has to identify the name by which one thinks of oneself. For instance, an individual whose name is Adeagbo Tunde John needs not to use the entire names if he does not think of himself by the three names. He has to choose between Adeagbo Tunde or Adeagbo John or other name through which he thinks of himself before changing letters involved in writing the names of numbers in order to analyze his fortune. The table below will help to change letters making up one’s name to numbers:

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| A | B | C | D | E | U | O | F |
| I | K | G | M | H | V | Z | P |
| Q | R | L | T | N | W | | |
| J | | S | | | X | | |
| Y | | | | | | | |

Source: Cavendish, 1971:71.

Cavendish explains further that these letter-number equivalents come from the Hebrew alphabet in which the letters also stood for numbers – aleph (A) for 1, beth (B) for 2 gimel (G) for 3 and so on. Noughts are disregarded so that S (Shin-300) is 3, K (Kaph – 20) is 2. There is no 9 in the table because the Hebrew letters which stood for 9, 90 and 900 have no equivalents in our alphabet. Numbers for letters like E and X which do not exist in Hebrew are taken from the Greek alphabet, where the letters also stood for numbers.

Before we proceed on how the name Camara Laye affected the entire life of the author, we need to enumerate the nine categories of fortune as revealed by Cavendish.

1. Those whose names total to 1 are always exceptionally powerful, positive and dominating. They are also forceful, aggressive and ambitious. They lead, pioneer, originate and invent. Self-reliant, obstinate, authoritative. They tolerate no rivals and have few close friends. They can be kind and generous to people who do what they want but they have a violent temper and no scruples if opposed. All this follows from the fact that 1 is the number of the God of Old Testament.

2. The number ‘two’ is an evil and female number.

It has all the opposite characteristics of number ‘one’. People whose names add to 2 make good subordinates and are obedient, quiet, helpful, gentle, modest, tidy and self-effacing, sweet-natured, sympathetic and persuasive. They are also over-sensitive, easily depressed, and unsure of themselves. And since 2 is the number of the devil, they may be subtly malicious and cruel.

3. Number three is the luckiest of numbers and belongs to fortunate, lively, sparkling, charming people who easily make money and conquests in love, who are talkative. They like to show off; they are highly talented, witty and gay. They tend to be unduly anxious for other people and lavish their efforts wastefully in too many directions.

4. ‘four’ is the number of the earth, it is distinctly gloomy and is the number of people who are solid and uninspired. They are hardworking but plodding, steady, cautious, conservative and conventional. Calm and composed on the surface. There may be violent eruptions of feeling underneath and also severe indigestion. They are excellent organizers and administrators but as 4 is essentially the number of poverty, disappointment and defeat, it does not hold out much prospect of success.

5. Those whose number is five are clever, jumpy, energetic, optimistic, versatile, impulsive, erratic and irresponsible. Nervous and highly-strung, lovers of risks and excitement. They are boastful, quick-tempered, resilient and bouncy. Because 5 is the number of sex (the word ‘sex’ adds to 5, incidentally), they have lurid love-lives.

6. Six is the number of well-balanced, peaceful, worthy but rather unexciting people, who are warm-hearted, reliable and kindly but fussy, gossipy and narrow in outlook. Loyal and affectionate, their interests are centred on home family and friends; wholesome and conventional. They dislike upset and rows of any sort. They work hard but rarely have any flair for business.

7. Seven belongs to people who want to retreat from the world around them into the privacy of their own reflections. It is one of the great magical numbers. Philosophical and scholarly, they value the things of the mind. They are reserved, serious and dignified, self-controlled, uninterested in money and material pleasures; sometimes sarcastic and aloof. Their ideas are profound but they found it hard to explain them and are impatient of contradiction or opposition.

8. By contrast ‘eight’ stands for involvement, in the rush and bustle of the everyday world, in money-making, business, politics. People with this number

have the capacity for great worldly success but also, unfortunately, for a disastrous failure. They do not forge ahead easily but by long effort, strain and concentration. They can be hard and selfish, grim and determined on the surface, sometimes wildly rebellious and eccentric underneath.

9. Nine is the number of high achievement, not in the worldly sense but in spiritual matters. It belongs to people who are high-minded, visionary, energetic, emotional and passionate, who have a sense of duty to others and an intense hatred of poverty, old age and ugliness, for themselves and everyone else often condemned as wild and impractical. They are easily imposed on and are always falling in and out of love. It is the number of initiation which involves mutilation of the body in the primitive societies.

Source: Cavendish 1971:71-72.

We need to turn each letter of the name Camara Laye into number in order to establish facts about his biography:

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | A | M | A | R | A | L | A | Y | E |
| 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Total = 22 | | | | | | | | | |

The addition of all these numbers gives us 22. This addition has to persist until we have one digit number i.e. $22 = 2 + 2 = 4$

The name ‘Camara Laye’ eventually gives us 4. The biography earlier presented reveals that Camara Laye was hardworking. He published the first novel in 1953 and the second one in 1954 despite the hardship he had in the 50s in France. He was also conservative. This was evident in his publication of *Dramouss*. He kept his plan to attack Sekou Toure’s government to himself until the novel saw the light of the day. The wife was caught unaware by the Guinean government because the conservative husband left Guinea without telling her.

We can also see that Camara Laye was an excellent administrator. He occupied several important positions after the independence of Guinea. This is because he was an excellent administrator and organizer as traceable to those whose names give us 4. Despite his ability to occupy several posts in Guinea, he was not a rich man. According to his biography, he could no longer fend for himself and his children and take care of the disease he had while on exile in Senegal. His inability to manage his situation financially later led to his death in 1980.

Another important characteristic of number 4 is disappointment. Camara Laye got married to Ramatoulaye Kante while in Senegal. He had no sympathy for Marie his first wife who was serving a jail term in Guinea owing to her husband's attack of the Guinean government.

Another method of analyzing one's destiny is by adding up figures that make up one's date of birth. Since he was born in 1-1-1928 we shall have it thus:

$$1 + 1 + 1 + 9 + 2 + 8 = 22$$

$$22 = 2 + 2 = 4$$

That of Camara Laye still gives us 4. This reinforces the fact that he was born to conform strictly to Cavendish's mythological belief about figure 4.

Camara Laye believes that it is possible to receive a particular name at birth. These names, without any metaphysical or mythological explanation are capable of determining one's character. For instance in *L'enfant noir* the narrator explains:

...on dit les frères jumeaux qu'ils naissent plus subtils que les autres enfants et quasiment sorciers; et quant à l'enfant qui les suit et qui reçoit le nom de "sayon", c'est-à-dire de 'puiné des jumeaux' il est, lui aussi, doué de don de sorcellerie,... (p. 75).

"...we could say the twin brothers that are born more subtle than other children and almost wizards; and as for the child that follows them and which receives the name of "Sayon, that is to say of the 'twins' younger brother', he is, also endowed with the gift of witchcraft..."

(our translation)

Idowu is the name given to the twins' younger brother or sister among the Yoruba while he/she is called *Sayon* among the Malinke of Guinea. The mother of the narrator in *L'enfant noir* is 'Sayon' by name. The narrator describes her thus: ...ses interventions sont toujours, sont forcément délicates (p. 75) meaning ...her interventions are always, inevitably delicate. A popular belief among the Yoruba people buttresses the position of that of Malinke as revealed by Camara Laye in *L'enfant noir* about the twins' younger brother and sister. They believe that given birth to *Idowu* after the twins is necessary. If not, he/she will enter into the mother's head and start disturbing her. The woman may eventually run mad. The twins are mysterious children but their immediate younger brother or sister is more mysterious. According to the narrator of *L'enfant noir*:

"...et même on le tient pour plus redoutable encore pour plus mystérieux encore que les jumeaux..., au vrai, on lui attribue une sagesse plus supérieure à celle des jumeaux,..." (p. 75).

...in fact he is considered, even more mysterious than the twins...; really, he is been attributed a more superior wisdom than that of the twins;..."

(our translation)

A change in how one writes one's name implies a change in one's destiny. A brilliant example given by Cavendish 1971 is that of Napoleon Buonaparte. When he altered his name by dropping U from 'Buonaparte', he altered his number from 1 which stands for power and victory to 4 which implies defeat. This actually changed the streak of successes he had in war to defeat. Here is the explanation:

$$\text{N A P O L E O N B U O N A P A R T E}$$

$$5 1 8 7 3 5 7 5 \quad 2 6 7 5 1 8 1 2 4 5 =$$

$$82 = \quad 8 + 2 = \quad 10 = \quad 1 + 0 = 1$$

Like we have said, the removal of 'U' will give us this.

$$\text{N A P O L E O N B O N A P A R T E}$$

$$5 1 8 7 3 5 7 5 \quad 2 6 7 1 8 1 2 4 5 =$$

$$76 = 7 + 6 = 13 = 1 + 3 = 4$$

This accounts for the reason why he was defeated because 4 is a number of defeat. One needs to be very careful of how one reasons and what one desires for oneself.

Totem and its Possessor

Babalola (2001) explains totem as a natural object, particularly an animal considered to have a connection with an individual or a group of people (family). In Camara Laye's *L'enfant noir*, there are two categories of a totem. We have family totem as explained by Babalola (2001) and also there are individual totems. In *L'enfant noir*, the family totem is presented as the spirit of a race. According to the narrator's father, *ce serpent, dit-il, est le génie de notre race.* (p. 17) meaning "This snake, he says, is the spirit of our race".

The narrator's father explains further that this snake presents itself to one person in their generation

and that it chooses to present itself to him. This small black snake should not be killed. It should be taken care of because it has a covenant of prosperity and well-being with their forefathers. This supernatural snake has helped its possessor to be the leader of the blacksmith of that region – he is the most skillful and the most popular of all the blacksmiths. If it is killed, ill-luck and multiple deaths will happen to members of the family that owns it.

The relationship between the totem and its possessor is stipulated by contract. The narrator explains this phenomenon when he declares *...il y a une identité entre le totem et son possesseur; cette identité est absolue,...* (p. 79) meaning *...there is an identity between the totem and its possessor; this identity is absolute....* In most cases this absolutism is the reason for amity between wild animals (taken as totems) and human beings. A living example is found in a monthly journal Entertainment Express (vol. 1, No. 14) of the caption *Wild man Lives with crocodiles, snakes, hyena*. This happened at Mushin, a suburb of Lagos. This man, Ashiru Halilu confessed that these wild animals have a long standing covenant with his forefathers and that is why they could not harm him at all. Another living example is found at Dele compound, Oje, Ibadan where a crocodile has to visit a newly born baby. Any baby who failed to receive this crocodile's visit is said to be a bastard.

Like we have rightly said, the novels we are trying to recognize the individual totems. In *L'enfant noir* according to the narrator:

“Ma mère, elle continuait de puiser l'eau du fleuve. Je la regardais puiser l'eau à proximité des crocodiles. Bien entendu, je la regardais de loin, car mon totem n'est pas celui de ma mère,...” (p. 79).

“My mother, was continuing to draw water from the river. I was looking at her drawing water near crocodiles. I was looking at her from afar, because my totem is not that of my mother,...”

(Our translation)

The narrator dares not move close to his mother who is fetching water near the crocodiles because his own totem is not a crocodile. The totem does not devour its possessor. It rather provides a means of livelihood to its owner. In *Le regard du roi*, Dioki's serpents are her sources of income. They help her to know the future and the customers do not go empty-headed. For example, when Clarence discovered that the King's arrival tarries, he decided to consult Dioki and was warned not to go empty-handed. Nagoa advises thus: *Vous ne pou-*

vez pas y aller les mains vides (p. 212) meaning *You cannot go empty-handed*. He explains further *si vous ne lui portez rien, elle ne vous repondra pas* (p. 212) meaning *if you do not bring her something, she will not respond to you*. In *Le regard du roi*, Dioki sees into the future by the help of her snakes of various colours. This was never done free of charge. The source of the totem can be traced to Ifa oracle. In the words of Abimbola (1977) every individual was born with one Ifa corpus or the other. Each of these corpuses has its own animal that should not be eaten or maltreated. This implies that everyone was born with one totem or the other. Nowadays, continuous violation of the spiritual contract embedded in one's totem is possible because nobody cares to know the totem that is attached to his/her own destiny. In the olden days, parents probe into the future of a newly born baby in black African nations. For instance the Yoruba people respected this practice and tried to obey the oracle for their well-being in the past. Adeagbo (A) (2014) sees this neglected phenomenon as one of the factors responsible for ill-luck, untimely death and many undesirable happenings that are comparably more rampant than what we experienced in the past.

The Belief in the Spirits and the Supernatural Power

In the novels of Camara Laye, the spirits are seen as the invisible elements that control the visible phenomena. First, the narrator presents the blacksmith's workshop as a sacred place that requires the presence of the spirits for the successful activities of the blacksmiths. The narrator remarks in *L'enfant noir* that *l'artisan qui travaille l'or doit se purifier au préalable, se laver complètement par consequent et, bien entendu s'abstenir, tout le temps de son travail, de rapport sexuel* (p. 32). meaning *The artisan who works with gold must first purify himself, bath completely as a result and, well understood abstain himself, all the time of his work, of sexual intercourse*.

This purification is compulsory if not, the spirits that assure the safety of a blacksmith at work, and the spirits that ensure good quality of the products would be sent away. The sexual intercourse is a dirty act which a blacksmith must avoid in order to have the support of the spirits at all time of his works.

To establish impurity through sexual intercourse, the narrator of *Le regard du roi* describes Clarence's attitude at the arrival of the king for whom he was waiting. Clarence refused to move close to the king. He has had indiscriminate sexual rapports with women and he

condemned himself for being reluctant at approaching the king. He himself confesses to his impurity.

We are not condemning this act since it is one of the reasons for getting married. We need to know that bathing thoroughly is necessary after it for purification. For instance, Kahveci Niyazi (2007) remarks that the prayer of a Muslim who refuses to have a special bath (janaba) after sexual intercourse will not be answered. In the same vein, the work of a blacksmith who refused to undergo a bath of purity will not be crowned with success.

Each natural element is controlled by a spirit as explained by the narrator of *L'enfant noir*. According to him, *L'adjuration des genies du feu, du vent, de l'or et la conjuration des mauvais esprits, cette science mon pere l'avait seul* (p. 31) meaning *The adjuration of the spirits of fire, of wind, of gold and the conjuration of bad spirits, my father was the only one having its knowledge. Knowledge and practices of such belong to the elders among the Black to prevent their abuse.*

The spirits involved in the adjuration and conjuration are invisible. They are capable of controlling the visible phenomena. Their operations are beyond the physical. Despite the invisibility of these spirits, they are being controlled through incantations and sacrifices by the black people of Africa. In their region, the narrator's father is the only one who knows how to control them through incantations and sacrifices.

The belief in the supernatural power governs the activities of the characters in the novels of Camara Laye. For instance the dream is described as the revelation of future events – a spiritual view of what shall happen in the future. In *L'enfant noir* the narrator's father confesses what happened before the snake appears physically to him:

Il s'est d'abord présenté sous forme de rêve. Plusieurs fois il m'est apparu et il me disait le jour où il se présenterait réellement à moi, il précisait l'heure et l'endroit. (p. 18)

It first presented itself to me in the dream. Several times it appeared to me and it was telling me the day when it would really present itself to me, it was precisising the time and the place.

The dream helps to bridge the gap between reality and fiction. The narrator's father's dream would have been a fiction without the physical encounter with the snake. The dream is a supernatural element that

controls the natural. This is why Obitaba, J.E. (2007) affirms that the traditional Africa is not a monolithic society but a place where the natural and supernatural interwoven.

The incessant killings and imprisonments of African politicians that characterize African politics is already revealed in the narrator's dream in *Dramouss*. In this novel, the narrator undergoes series of imprisonments; he witnesses problems and killings of the politicians. The spirit that delivers him from these imprisonments is called *Dramouss*.

We need to stress the fact that man has control over whatever undesirable metaphysical phenomenon received through dream. According to Adeagbo (B) (2012) the sacrifices (by the traditionalists) and the prayers offered (at home, church or mosque) to the Almighty on the altar are good weapons for rejecting the effects of bad dreams. All these will reach the throne of mercy where the ill-luck could be erased. She further explains that every desirable situation received through dreams also need prayers in order to make them realities.

The recognition of the spirits of the soil in *L'enfant noir* is also very important. The narrator explains that: "La fête ne tombe pas à date fixe: elle dépendait de la maturité du riz, et celle-ci à son tour dépendait du ciel, ...encore de la volonté des génies du sol, qu'on ne pouvait se passer de consulter" (p. 55).

"The festival does not fall on a fixed date: it depended on the maturity of rice, and this one on its own depended on the sky... again on the will of the spirits of soil which we couldn't but consult"

There is a chain of dependence in the harvest festival. The approval of the sky is first mentioned. This implies that God is considered first in the farm work. He controls climatic elements like rain, sun needed for good planting. The permission of the spirit of the soil is necessary because rice is planted in the soil. By implication the spirits need to protect them from being bitten by the snakes while working on the farm. It also helps farmers to have good products.

The Belief in the Dead (Ancestors)

In *L'enfant noir* when the narrator won a scholarship to study in France, the mother tried her utmost to stop him from going. He was the only male child in the family-an African family where male children

are more valuable than the female ones. She does not see any importance in their child's departure to France. She lamented:

Et dis-moi, qui prendra soin de toi? Qui te réparera tes vêtements? Qui te préparera tes repas?. (p. 217).

And tell me, who will be taking care of you? Who will be mending your clothes? Who will be preparing your food
(our translation)

This issue divided the narrator's family because the father was of the contrary opinion. As for him, there is a way of taking care of oneself in abroad. He summarizes his position by saying *Les Blancs ne meurent pas de faim* (p. 217) meaning the white do not die of hunger.

Having convinced that her son would not yield to her, she resolved to consult the soothsayers. They told her that she should make a sacrifice to her later father for the protection of her son in France. According to the soothsayers, this would help him to have a successful stay in France. This practice is an important aspect of African traditional religion.

The narrator was committed to the spirit of his late grandfather through a bull slaughtered for sacrifice. In this case, the dead (the ancestors) are taken to be omnipresent. Where the parents of the narrator are absent, the spirit of the late grandfather keeps protecting him. In *Dramouss* the narrator testifies that despite series of lack which he witnessed in France, his stay was crowned with success. In a divine way, a white woman Tante Aline met his needs for quite some time when he was France. In the narrator's opinion, the dead remain members of the family to which they belong before their death.

CONCLUSION

We need to note certain facts at this point. In the first instance, we referred to the name with which we think of ourselves as a determining factor of our destiny. If man's thought has a very great influence on his life, then man needs to cultivate the habit of positive thinking towards himself and others. It is the habit of positive reasoning that will lead to great achievement in life. The biblical reference to twelve spies sent by Moses to the land of Canaan is a good example of positive thought. The only two who confessed positively

of their ability to possess the land eventually got to the promised land while the remaining ten who belittled themselves limiting the power of the Almighty perished in the wilderness (read Numbers 13 and 14). So positive reasoning is a metaphysical key to achieving one's aims.

At our own contemporary time, we do not need to start consulting in order to know the animal(s) that has/have a connection with our destiny in the form of a totem. The most important thing is to stop maltreating animals, especially domestic animals. We should be aware of the fact that they also have a life like we human beings. In Yoruba land, some people always try their utmost not to spare any dog that traverses the road while they are driving. They believe dogs are animals that are eaten by the god of the iron-the deity that is responsible for safety on the road. So they need to appease him by killing a dog with their vehicle. But why don't they buy their own dogs if really they want to appreciate or appease the god of iron for a safe journey. This does not stop at that. There are others who pour water on goats unnecessarily or throw stones at animals like cats, fowls etc. simply because they trespass, destroy or eat their properties. Asides the issue of totems, we should be aware that the nature that is responsible for their existence can decide to punish anyone who does them bad (read Quran 6:38).

There are unseen forces controlling the physical elements. They should be invoked in ways that will benefit mankind since man has control over them. Though in the African primitive society, the power and the secret behind invocation belonged to the aged. Owing to western civilization, every human being now has the power to ask for what he/she desires or reject what he/she does not need. This is one of the benefits of western religions- Christianity and Islam. You can pray to God in your own way and your prayer will be answered. We are not condemning the African Traditional Religion, we are only trying to say the western religions have taught us how to have direct access to the throne of mercy. This will also lead us to conclude that relying on ancestors is no more necessary for those who no longer practice it. Our direct access to the throne will keep working for us.

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