

African Heritage of Holistic Healing with Herbs

1Amarachi Nnachi Ukoma, ²Inya Ekuma Ogechukwu C. and ³Oji A. E.

¹*Department of Philosophy and Religion Ebonyi State University Abakaliki,*

²*Department of Philosophy and Religion Ebonyi State University Abakaliki.*

³*The Reformed Presbyterian Theological College Afikpo*

ABSTRACT:-Faced with the vicissitudes of life and the vulnerability of man in the society, constant efforts are made to preserve one's being so that total annihilation could be averted. As such, whenever man's life is threatened by disease and other misfortunes, various steps are employed to exterminate the sources of danger. And to maintain a wholesome well-being man reclines to one source of Medicare or the other. In a typical African setting recourse is made to the medicine men/women, the healers who are divinely vested with vast knowledge in restoring health to normalcy. This paper from historical approach, analysis of participatory interview and related literature considered the general concept of life and health in Igbo cosmology and found that (a) various herbalists are variously called, (b) a times rituals and sacrifices are involved before offered healings could be claimed. However some herbalists disclaim the later assumption as they claim herbs can remain effective without rituals. It is concluded that for a better or improved health-care delivery to people, a good understanding of the whole process is required, after all a good percentage of orthodox drugs are extracted from plants and shrubs. These trees and shrubs are also the basic ingredients of African medicine which without rituals can be efficacious. Indeed there is assurance of healing, without the incumbencies of rituals and fetish practices in African medicinal heritage. This research, therefore, recommends that African heritage of holistic healing be explored and improved upon to attract people of all faith.

Keywords: *Africa Heritage, Holistic Healing, Herbalist and Herbs.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Common parlance has it that Health is wealth. It is also African to believe that *Ulo Qjoo* (bad house) is the presence of ill-health in a family than *Onwu* (death). So in Africa as in other parts of the world, when man is faced by the vicissitudes of life and the vulnerability of man in the society, constant efforts are made to preserve one's being so that total annihilation could be averted. As such, whenever man's life is threatened by disease and other misfortunes, various steps are employed to exterminate the sources of danger. And to maintain a wholesome well-being man reclines to one source of Medicare or the other.

These other sources that are not subjected to scientific processes are referred to as alternative medicine. "It consists of a wide range of health care practices, products and therapies. Examples include new and traditional medicine practices such as homeopathy, naturopathy, chiropractic, energy medicine, various forms of acupuncture, traditional Chinese medicine, Ayurvedic medicine, and Christian faith healing" (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternative_medicine).

Traditional African Medicine (TAM), which is our socio-economic and socio-cultural heritage, servicing over 80% of the populations in Africa, is one of such sources. Although, it has come a long way from the times of our ancestors, not much significant progress on its development and utilization had taken place due to colonial suppression on one hand, foreign religions in particular, absolute lack of patriotism and political will of our Governments, and then on the other hand, the carefree attitudes of most African medical scientists of all categories (Elujoba et. al, 2005).

In a typical African setting recourse is made to the medicine men/women, the healers who are divinely vested with vast knowledge in restoring health to normalcy with herbs. In Ghana, as in several other African countries plants or herbal products are used by traditional healers for the management and/or the treatment of various cancers (and other illnesses). "However, the efficacies of some of these plant products, as anticancer agents, are often ill defined because of bias (Ayim, et al, 2007:16-22). In the Western part of Nigeria *Stephania dinklagei* is used as an antibacterial property and wound healing property which is comparable to that of gentamicin sulphate (Udegbunam, et.al. 2015). "*F. exasperata* is also a medicinal plant referred to as "sand paper plant" popularly known as *Ewe ipin* in Yoruba language of Western Nigeria. The whole plant is known to have several medicinal properties in African" (Abotsi, at. el., 2010) traditional medicine. On a good note tribes living along the common borders of East Africa have "occasionally borrowed herbal knowledge from their neighbours such as Malawi, Zambia, Burundi or Rwanda... In cases where herbal remedies of a plant have been provided by two or more tribes the descriptions given are composite, reflecting all the views from the different

ethnic groups”(Kokwaro, 2009). The above are mentioned but a few. Recent survey proves that, “the use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is equally prevalent among the white, African-American/black, Latino, Asian, and Native American population in US” (Marckenzie et. at, 2003). This paper considering the general concept of life and health in Igbo cosmology consulted herbalists regarding their healing work, and related literatures. Furthermore, the research sought to know how the herbalists were called and their acceptance to become traditional medical practitioners (herbalists). Many if them claimed divine call which no mortal can resist. This paper found that practices, times required rituals and sacrifices offered before any claimed healing. This paper found also that for a better or improved health-care delivery to people to be achieved a good understanding of the whole process is required, hence a good percentage of orthodox drugs are extracted from plants and shrubs. These trees and shrubs are also the basic ingredients of African medicine (TAM) which can be very, very efficacious without rituals. Indeed there is assurance of healing, without the incumbencies of rituals and fetish practices which scare away people of other faith from this Traditional African medicinal (TAM) heritage.

2.1 African heritage

For the Africans in general and the Igbo people in particular, the highest value is life. The Igbos express this in certain circumstantial and derivative names like “Ndubisi” (Life is of supreme importance); and “Nduka” (Life is greater) to mention but a few. Due to the much emphasis placed on life in Igbo cosmology, its enhancement and preservation in the Africa, is termed as being “*heavily anthropocentric*” (Nwala, 1985: 144). Hence whatever enhances life like health is pursued with dexterity and whatever diminishes or impairs it like illness is avoided.

The concept of health is globally shared among tribes though cultural expression may differ, the rudimental philosophy remains the same

Local concepts of illness are an important feature in the health perception and medicinal practices of different cultural groups. These include cultural bound syndromes (CBS), defined as: “a group of folk illnesses, each of which is unique to a particular group of people, cultural, or geographical area”. These ailments mostly consist of a variety of symptoms which causes are explained by cultural or magical beliefs. CBS are known to persist in populations even after migration to an area where their beliefs about health and illness are not shared with the local community. The well-known Latin-American CBS susto (fright), defined as a person who is believed to have lost his/her soul and became ill as a result of fright by an unexpected accident, is also known among the Hispanic population in the United States , The practise of drinking bitter tonics, an African medicinal mixture used to enhance male sexual power and prevent disease by “making the blood bitter”, has survived two migratory moves: it is common among descendants of African slaves in the Americas and among Caribbean migrants in Europe (Mshana 2000).

According to Onunwa (1990:81), “Among the unfriendly agents that threaten life here on earth (for the Igbo) is illness. The other enemy which the (Igbo) hates is death itself”. This makes the office of healing with the role of the herbalists very paramount as it ensures a continuity of life. This is succinctly expressed by Shorter (1975:60) that; “Sickness for the African is a diminution of life, a threat posed to life, and healing is an activity second only to that of giving of life. Petition; for healing and longevity of life; is probably the most common subject of prayer” in Igbo cosmology.

Since health guarantees life, all that promotes man’s life and health must be embraced. The “homoeopathic” theory unveils that man is composite of body, and soul. Since Igbo people have a unified view of reality, this composition of body and soul in man is not to be understood in Platonic sense where the spirit or soul is seen as a separate entity that inhibits the body. Neither should the soul be seen in Aristotelian sense as the form of the body. Rather, both the body and the soul are linked with each other in an inseparable manner. Accordingly, Oguejiofor (1996:22) says “... the conceptual inseparability of a person’s body from his soul is an outcrop of the inseparability of the spiritual and the material world in Igbo conception”. He further argues that ... the Igbo’s pattern of healing always aims at achieving a holistic healing that encompasses all the aspects of the whole person. So for man to be healthy, his physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual well-being must be sound. Man further lives in a society and interacts or relates with other beings-living and non living, seen and unseen, physical and spiritual. Hence to be healthy and alive entails maintaining or achieving a harmonious relationship with oneself and with all the beings / realities in one’s world-view. Otherwise, ill-health and death could result. Udechukwu (1978:87) encapsulates this concept thus;

For man to survive in this world, to be able to live a successful life, and upon death to join the ancestors, he strives at all time to maintain a harmonious relationship with all the forces that impinge on his life and being. This according to him “means to continuous quest for equilibrium, the wooing of benevolent forces and the keeping in check of the malevolent ones.

In line with the above views, Madu (2004: 26-27) moves further to elaborate that;

Scholars seem to be unanimous that Igbo traditional Medicare delivery borders on the restoration of body equilibrium to be in tune with the natural forces... for the traditional Igbo, sickness or illness is deviation from the natural, from the normal bodily and cosmic harmony, and to restore this harmony, (health / life) the intricate connecting forces that operate in a web like fashion must be discerned and normalized. Thus health is for the Igbo, the normalization of the forces, seen and invisible in accordance with the natural laws. And this is the duty of the tradomedicalist or the medical doctors that Igbos call the Dibias, although we have different kinds of Dibias (native doctors).

2.2 Ogwu (Medicine)

The Igbos use the word “*Ogwu*” (Drug/Herbs) to denote the entire activities and medicines administered to bring about a holistic healing. All that is employed to secure one’s health and protection like charms and amulets, to destroy one’s enemies, to bring about one’s physical, psychological or spiritual healing is generally grouped under traditional medicine which the Igbos call “*Ogwu*”. Sofowora summarily says traditional medicine entails; “The total combination of knowledge and practice whether explicable or not, used in diagnosing, preventing or eliminating a physical, mental or social disease and may rely exclusively on past experience and observation handed down from generation to generation verbally or written” (Sofowora: 1984:2). Mention may need to be made that word “*Ogwu*” in some localities could mean madness, but it is more appropriate for herbs and medicines. Whereas Herbs are “parts of various plants cultivated for their aromatic, pungent, or otherwise desirable substances. Spices and herbs consist of rhizomes, bulbs, barks, flower buds, stigmas, fruits, seeds, and leaves. They are commonly divided into the categories of spices, spice seeds, and herbs” (Encyclopædia Britannica). The combination of substances from the trees and shrubs for the curative means generally referred to as “*Ogwu*”

Ogwu forms part of what nature and African ancestors had bequeathed to African world. To satisfy the yawning for comprehensive or holistic health the traditional African medicine is freely exploited and the same art is passed from generation to generation. The influence of Western medicine and civilization has not been able to erode this great value and heritage.

2.3 Source of Herbs

According to Merriam-Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, Herb is “a plant or a part of a plant that is used as medicine or to give flavour to food, a seed-producing annual, biennial, or perennial that does not develop persistent woody tissue but dies down at the end of a growing season and a plant or plant part valued for its medicinal, savoury, or aromatic qualities” (<http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com/>).

Today there are at least 120 distinct chemical substances derived from plants (Herbs) that are considered as important drugs currently in use in one or more countries in the world.. Several of the drugs sold today are simple synthetic modifications or copies of the naturally obtained substances. For example, many years ago a plant chemical was discovered in a tropical plant, *Cephaelis ipecacuanha*, and the chemical was named emetine. A drug was developed from this plant chemical called Ipecac which was used for many years to induce vomiting mostly if someone accidentally swallowed a poisonous or harmful substance. Ipecac can still be found in pharmacies in many third world countries but has been mostly replaced by other drugs in the United States. Another example of this is the plant chemical named taxol. The name taxol is the name of the plant chemical originally discovered in the plant. A pharmaceutical company copied this chemical and patented a drug named Paclitaxel™ which is used in various types of tumours today in the U.S. and many other countries (Taylor, 2000)

3.1 Holistic Healing

Igbo cosmology challenges world view with the tripartite composition of man (Kayode, 198:50, 52). It is also African to believe that for a healing to be total all the faculties of man must enjoy a state of well being. This ideology presupposes that there could be periods of ill-health. Africans believe that the causatives to ill-health could be natural and spiritual. Of course there is hardly a cause in African Traditional Religious theology “without spiritual/metaphysical cause; hence man must look beyond the physical events to their spiritual etiology” (Imasogie, 1982; 76). This concept offers a leadership position to the Diviner who is usually consulted (Okwueze, 2003: 125) in the institutionalised African Traditional Religious faith. In many cases these Diviners double as medicine men and women or some times perform the single function of deciphering the spiritual dimension of ill health in man or the African society. With this backdrop healing in African context has to be ramifying touching all the three parts of man. The herbs in some cases attract the idea of cleansing to take care of the spiritual. This may be the psychological aspect of African Traditional Religion as the Diviners must appeal to the conscience of the ill for the assurance that offences against the gods, land or ancestor, which may have caused ill health, had been expatiated (Kayode, 198:9). Having noted this, one now moves to consider what it entails to become an herbalist.

3.2 The Call of the Herbalist

Although, there are many office holders in Igbo traditional religion like men/women, diviners/mediums/seers, rain makers, priests and traditional rulers, the herbalists who are among the Traditional African Medical (TAM) practitioners is prominent. It is evident, however, that some combine these roles or offices with that of the priest, acting as healers or diviner at the same time. It is note worthy to mention that the herbalist according to Arubaluaeze (1990: 40) “is a type of medicine man. He is called “man of trees”. He has wide knowledge of the curative properties of herbs, plants bark and roots. He is to the Igbo man the greatest gift and the most useful source of help”. In times of health hazard he or she is handy to bring health solutions. This vocation and the sole duty of the herbalist are to heal the sick. But how does one become an herbalist? Here the views of the interviewed traditional herbal practitioners are pertinent.

According to Nwokwa (2012), the call to be an herbalist came naturally to her. She affirms that she did not learn it from anybody. Rather, her father and mother were herbalists when they were alive. And the “Spirit of the herbs” wanted her to embrace the vocation when she married but her husband refused. The spirit kept on disturbing her to the extent that she lost all her nine children and had three miscarriages because she failed to comply with the demands of the spirit. A native diviner (Seer) was consulted who told her that her problems are spiritual and will not stop unless she accepts to become an herbalists. Finally, she complied. It was only when she accepted the call that her children stopped dying and her miscarriages ceased. She later got three other children who are still living. This is one of the mystery of Igbo cosmology which science may not explain in full.

In a similar incidence, Oketa (2012), a native of Agbaja Unuhu in Izzi recounts that his trouble started when ‘Agwu’, the spirit of medicines called him but he refused. He was a successful businessman at Onitsha and did not wish to part with his business but the business gradually collapsed. Yet he was not interested in the call. He saw it in dreams and visions but was adamant. Then he began having much trouble, disturbances and sicknesses such that he became helpless.

On a certain occasion one day, while at his farm, he became so sick that he entered into a trance. Then the spirit came to him and started showing him the herbs and how they are used to cure illness. When he came back to his senses, he first applied the herbs on himself and they worked. From thenceforth, he started using the herbs, roots, bark of trees or whatever the spirit directed him to use for the cure of all sorts of illness. Since then people from far and near have kept on coming to him for healing. The above views concerning their call tallies with what Idowu (1973: 200) enunciates “Traditional doctors in Africa often claim that they are taught medicine by divinities or, more generally, in dreams or in trances or during meetings with the spirits in forests”.

In line with the above views regarding the call of the herbalists, Arubaluaeze (190: 120) observes that; *The medicine – men and women are highly specialized by virtue of their long training, experience and probably special knowledge believed to be given by the spirits..., “Agwu” the patron spirit of medicine is mostly involved as it is believed that herbs have no potency without the support of the spirits.*

3.3 Holistic Healing and Sacrifice

It is an African belief system that when one commits a crime and is in trouble that requires the assistance of the ancestors, who demand for a sacrifice. Here, instead of your life being terminated because of the crime you have committed, the ancestor uses the sacrificial animal they demand as a substitution. Regarding this view, Ekeokpara 2005: 55) recounts that; the belief here is that the sickness and life of the patient is transferred to the animal which will now suffer whatever consequence that would have happened to the patient. This in turn frees the patient from his / her illness.

Once the sacrifice is offered, spiritually and manually the healer’s labours are reduced. The *Dibia* simply performs some ritual acts on the sick in accordance with directives of the ancestors or spirits to cleanse the sick from his / her sickness. The sacrifices also serve to ward off the attack of the witches / wizards and other bad spirits who capitalize on human weakness to attack mankind. But once the prescribed rituals have been completed, the sick becomes freed from sickness through some herbs which will now form part of his or her perfect or holistic healing. But the question still remains: “what brings about the full recovery of the patient here?” Is it the sacrifice offered to placate the ancestor(s) or spirit(s) or the herbs given to the patient or both? Hasn’t the faith or mind of the patient some role to play in cooperating and accepting the particular medication it desires – be it orthodox, traditional medicine? In other words, ‘is sacrifice a sine qua non for holistic healing in African traditional concept?’ The *Dibias* are divided, on this question but united by the fact that holistic healing is possible in African. Further more some people are of the view that animal sacrifice must while some others are against the view. Yet a few people are indecisive on the matter. On this matter Onunwa (1990: 92) has this to say;

The traditional medicine man understands the psychological background of his parents as well as his world view and tries to meet him at that point of his needs. The healer knows that he could remove some of the rituals and secrets that shroud his work without impairing the efficacy of the herbs and roots which have natural

therapeutic powers in them. But to reassure his patient, and also improve his credibility, he retains most of the 'mystical' aspects of his methods.

It is African to believe that there are certain illnesses that call-for ritual washing for healing to occur. Ekeokpara (2005:54) admits this; "In cases involving rituals, the spirit of the ancestors are invoked to seek their help to make the medicine effective or efficacious". Idowu (1973: 200) explains further that;

The mention of invocation of ancestors in connection with the practice of medicine is a common feature in the practice of medicine in many parts of Africa. It is an accepted practice that apart from God and / or the divinity, the ancestors who first practiced medicine or who were past masters and teachers of medicine must be given due honour. It is believed that this makes still more for the efficacy of medicine.

Furthermore, Onunwa (1990:84) agrees that before embarking on the "ritual washing", the patients are made to recite a confessional statement. These confessional entreaties are meant to give psychological relief to the patients. Onunwa (1990: 84) moves on to affirm the importance of the religious ritual in healing thus;

The fact remains that the African world-view upholds the power of the spirits over the medicines... some evil spirits and other unfriendly forces might be lurking at some secret places to destroy the potency of genuine efforts over the medicines... some evil spirits and other unfriendly forces might be lurking at some secret places to destroy the potency of genuine efforts of the 'doctor' to help his patients. Religious rituals are therefore, important to ward off such unfriendly spirits and enhance the powers of the friendly ones to revitalize the efficacy of the medicines.

Here now comes our problem and were some of the medicine men differ. A man with persistent headache was diagnosed with schizophrenia and he had sleepless night due to strange dreams. Several hospitals including psychiatric clinics he went to could not bring about his healing. At last, he was taken to a traditional healer who applied certain rituals and cleansing and the man recovered.

Mbam Agbom (2012) in his own contribution quips 'for the herbs and roots to be effective in actualizing desired cure, the herbalists need to touch them. In touching the herbs their spirit acknowledged by 'Agwu' who called them will enter into the medicine for efficacy. Otherwise, the herbs or the medicine will not work. According to him, "if it were possible for anyone to gather herbs, mix and prepare them for healing to be effected, then they would be no need of their being called to become herbalists. However, this does not mean that one cannot get things like "dogoyaro" to cure malaria. But most serious cases must require attention". It is note worthy to mention here that Agbom in absolute conclusion preclude any art of formal education in the field. Though some 'Dibias' have assistants jet that is by divine calling, because one must have been convinced that one is called for that before enlisting to assist and by so doing gain extra knowledge in handling *Ngbarogwu na Nkpakwukwo* (roots and leaves).

On how the herbs are administered, Peter Nwibo (2012) maintained that the administration of herbs depends on the type of sicknesses and what the spirit directs. Sometimes, it may be a combination of two or more herbs. And some other times, it may entail using roots, back of trees or even other things as the spirit directs. (*Other things here remain connotative of the fact that some mystical or sacrificial items are a times involvement is not ruled out.*)

Out of the five herbalists interviewed, only one person acknowledged using sacrifices / rituals when it calls for. The other four persons were rather defensive on the issue of sacrifice; rather they explained why they abhorred sacrifice in their healing process. They remove sacrifices because the Western World attributes such as being fetish. Generally, they all admitted that they can cure all sorts of illnesses like rheumatism, pneumonia, ulcer, epilepsy, venereal diseases or infections, people attacked by poison, infertility, miscarriage and so on. At the same time, one of them admitted that cases beyond one could be referred to else other who may have more be competent in handling such ailment. Here there is a matter of specialization Africa Traditional medicine (TAM).

Though most illnesses are mainly cured with roots and medicinal herbs, the diagnosis of very disturbing illnesses, their causes and cure are normally necessary in order to ensure a proper and effective treatment. The Diviners are inevitably brought in at this juncture. According to Onunwa (1990:82-83); this brings to the fore that healing in Africa is not just focused on the physical manifestation called pains or mentality abnormality, but goes deeply into the spiritual.

Because healing is an aspect of the religious ritual, the diviners is usually consulted if the patient's condition does not improve after taking initial simple treatment... The diviner may reveal the causes, and recommend the medicine-man who would cure the disease... Among the Mende of Sierra Leone, it is reported that the diviner is consulted when the sickness refuses to respond to treatment.

In the treatment of illness, there is the physical / physiological treatment which usually involves herbal mixtures that could be taken orally or externally like ointments. There is also the psychological healing that addresses the issues of the mind. Then the spiritual healing which appears to be mystic could involve certain rituals, incantations, use of magical preparations, invocations, confessions, prayers and sacrifices.

Here the sick man was asked to bring wine and an animal for sacrifices. The healer made him to make some confess and he killed the animal for sacrifice to appease the ancestral spirit. Then the man was made to communicate with the ancestral spirit. The sacrifice with its rituals opened the way for the communication with the ancestral spirit. It was diagnosed that a strange spirit was haunting the man through restless dreams. Being foreign and aggrieved, fighting it will not yield any fruit. The only way will be to embrace it in friendship. This called for the ritual and sacrifice through which the spirit was acknowledged and given what it demanded. It is only then that the man whose sickness could not be cured with the orthodox medicine was healed through traditional medication. This is a kind of healing that transcends the physical into spiritual realm. It is an example of a holistic healing whereby the psychological, physical and spiritual aspects of the sufferer are healed and the person is reconciled with the other unseen forces of the world. Awareness that every sickness has a cause necessitated the diagnosis of the cause of the illness and what must be done for it to be a cured made this holistic healing process possible.

The faithful of the religions like Christianity and Islam see the sacrifice and communications with the ancestor and as part of prayer or some kind similar in the religions. While the mystery remains uncovered, the fictions or otherwise of this African heritage remains an act beyond human explanation and judgment. No matter how we see it, this party is a corge in the wheel of African medicine that needs to be addressed by African traditional Religious theologians.

4.1 What Matters

The question to answer here is, “must there be sacrifice before this kind of healing takes place”? Four of the interviewed herbal practitioners express that sacrifice is not necessary. For them, to use any animal to offer sacrifice to a deity or an ancestor so as to be healed is uncalled-for and it amounts to idol worship. This position is influenced by Christianity. However it is a matter of faith and religious inclination. According to Bernard (2012), “in matter of life and death anything can be sacrificed” this scarifies could or God / gods. Following the above inferences it is deducible that the ancestors or the spirits usually ask for sacrifices as such the cost treatment depend on the magnitude of the health concern. The sacrificial animals demanded could be fowls, goats, sheep or cow. In some cases, the animal is beaten dead on the body of the patient or after touching the patient with the animal, it is then killed (Ekeokpara. 2005:55). Such animals help the ancestors to do their job so that what is desired from them can be gotten. One of the *Dibias* of this school of thought said, “if you fail to offer the sacrifices, they ask for, it may take a longer time for one to receive the solution from ancestors. But the bloods one’s ancestors receive from the scarified animals give them the power to do their jobs well. If other wise they may even ignore requests and have the problem prolonged. It follows that just as human beings eat food to get energy and to be healthy, so do the ancestors need or require the blood from the sacrificed animals in order to do their work well. This conclusion gave birth to some of the practices within this heritage that are aimed at making people stand in awe of the medicine man. So exhibitions in dirty environments, looking unkept, wearing of mournful faces and special attires by the *Dibia* (Medicine man) is called “*ebabe ekpo*” or “*ebube mong*”. This external exhibitions make people dread the herbalist and herbalism. The un-calibratable doses also added to the fear of those who would have ordinarily patronized this African heritage. However, the further question one may need to ask, is “Is it the dosage, that matter or the solution to poor health”. One may simply answer here that it is the solution that comes from the herbs and not their dosage that should be one’s concern.

4. 2 Bias

The Western medicine man would not accept this means of restoration of health simply because western scientific processes are not followed. For the Western medicine man and his collaborators it is unbelievable and unacceptable not because it did not happen, but because it cannot happen through African heritage and practice. Most of the time facts are adduced for such indifference, though facts may not always be the synonymous with truth.

II. RECOMMENDATION

This research recommends that this African heritage of holistic healing be explored and improved upon to attract people of all faith. After all, African medical market today, has Chinese, Indian and other continental herbal products that are yet to be challenged by untapped Africa abundant herbal resources.

III. CONCLUSION

It is obvious that in spite of the challenges of the orthodox or western medications and different faiths, Africans still recline to the herbalists for treatment. And some orthodox doctors even refer some cases they cannot handle to the herbalists. Attesting to this, Idowu discloses that;

in cases of serious ailment, European medicine without augmentation with the traditional remedy appears to Africans by and large as inadequate. It is common knowledge that relatives of patients who are admitted to

hospitals 'smuggle' in for them medicine obtained from traditional doctors. And it not infrequently happens that African doctors trained in the European methods advise relatives of patients in hospitals, 'This is not a case for this place', or, This case, as I see it, cannot be treated successfully in this hospital; why don't you take the patient home and try "the native way" (Idowu. 1973: 2001).

This proves the fact that the traditional healers or the herbalists are still relevant and helpful to the people even when they have been negatively criticized. Concerning such biased or negative critics, Ukoma (2011:77) observes that;

the Christians' apathy on one hand is rooted on the way traditional healers carry on their activities; attributing herbal efficacy to the gods and fetishism. And on the other the problem of hygienic preparations and preservation. Christian bias on herbal medicine can be attributed to colonial and missionary indoctrination which viewed everything African paganistic without proper investigation.

Quite alright there could be short – comings in the practices of the herbalists. These short falls as there are not incurable as they could be improved upon instead of them evil. As far as they restore the confidence of Africans in their God / gods and ancestors who only can clean spiritual sickness of sin. It is note worthy to mention that countries like India, Japan and China to mention but a few have advanced so much in health care delivery to the people simply because they did not ignore their traditional herbal medications. Rather than discourage local efforts; these countries encouraged their local practitioners to advance alongside with the orthodox medical practitioners. In Africa the question of the workability of local methods and processes is not always paramount. The involvement of sacrifices is inconsequential as what matters is holistic healing. The doubtful aspects that may not actually constitute the means of curative need be expunged from this process or overlooked.

Health care delivery to the people will really improve and grow, if instead of negatively criticizing the herbalists, herbalism and herbs our government should recognize the Herbalists and educate them as well as make funds available for their research and advancement. African Herbal medication Dialogue should be opened between their Western or orthodox medical counter parts so as to expose the potency of African Herbs, which could be harnessed and integrated for advanced and better holistic health care delivery to the people. This inturn will enhance African economy

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