

**“TWO WRONGS DON’T MAKE A RIGHT”:
A MYTHICAL NARRATION OF THE US-CHINA
COVID-19 SAGA THROUGH EDO
COSMOLOGICAL STORY**

* * *

Oladosu Olusegun Adebolu

Department of Religious Studies,
Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Osun State Nigeria.
Tel- +2347035080096, Email-olusegunoladosu1@gmail.com
olusegunoladosu @oauife.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

Jealousy is as old as man. People become jealous of one another because of insecurities, fear, hatred, and sometimes, for no just reason. In societies where jealousy is the order of the day, meaningful development cannot be found. The Edo creation story is a case study of jealousy and hatred of two divinities that were expected to function in their own space but due to jealousy, their relationship was halted and this resulted in an abysmal relationship. A related case of the US-CHINA crisis is a format of ancient rivalry in Edo’s creation story. This is an instance that has created international jealousy that resulted in a conspiracy formulated around the COVID-19 pandemic. The US-CHINA economic and diplomatic stalemates have produced several global scenes that involved conflicts and confusion among which the COVID-19 saga was recognized. Using a sociological conflict theory, this essay will appraise the effects of jealousy as a syndrome in relationships which tends to be injurious to individuals and society at large.

Key Words: Jealousy, US-China, Edo creation story, COVID-19, Pandemics.

Word count: 165

Introduction

Bilateral diplomacy is a common vogue in the relation among committees of nations. This help to assess and addressed mutual and common voice in territorial and economic development. Diplomatic relation is key to the building block of international relations that allows healthy dealings in the area of culture, technology, security and political institutions. The trend of diplomacy always involves negotiation with a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Thus, it is a norm that involves bargaining among countries for a healthy relationship.

In the light of US-CHINA relations, this kind of bilateral norms has turned into a tragedy according to Christensen¹. Christensen narrated that, the relationship between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China on the international stage over time, has developed to a divisive stage due to the trade war, pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, massive repression against Uighurs in Xinjiang, and increased U.S. and Chinese naval activities in disputed waters off China's coast. Christensen, therefore, affirms that the two countries' political scene became more traumatic in the year 2020 when the COVID-19 situation mounted with a global crisis that triggered conflict between the two countries.

Cosmology is the study of the structure of the universe which attempts to discover the principles of unity that sustain

¹ Thomas J. Christensen, A Modern Tragedy? Covid-19 and U.S.-CHINA Relations, *Brookings Institution* (2020), 1-2

"Two wrongs don't make a right": a mythical narration of the US-China Covid-19 saga through Edo

creation². Cosmology in this sense, identifies the immediate environment as a reflection of the universe. In this contest, myth is seen as the functional way through which the ideology of the concept of cosmology is understood in its oral validation with meanings. Myth in connection with cosmology, through symbolic paradigm, makes possible a balancing polarity that makes the physical universe advance in meaning. Edo cosmology, an indigenous story in this same manner, is a conflict-ridden narrative that explained a faulty diplomacy in the creation story of two ancient men created by God. This narrative also identified biases and conflict in their communal development and growth. These attitudes aggravated life extinction as a result of jealousy engendered through their action. This in a way threatened the principle of unity.

Conflict in human affairs is a mindset game influenced by the activities of members or stakeholders that are involved in a concerned affair in any given society. Reactions to issues play an important role in how conflict is deployed in human affairs. From Marxist theory, conflict is seen essentially as the product of society³. This is because human beings engage in reactions and counter-reactions concerning issues that determine the existence of any society. Whenever reactions to issues are not handled genuinely, then such may brew jealousy, hatred, arson, insecurity, lack of trust and several other problems that would

² Ifa Concept of Cosmology as the basis for Divination, A guide Created by the Atlanta centre, Woodruff Library, CC-.BY-NC 4.0

³ Savur Manorama, "Sociology of conflict theory," *Journal of Social Scientist* 3 no12 (1975): 29-30

endanger the society towards development. Arguments normally revolve around conflict due to underestimation or underrated response to values in one's principle, ideology or philosophy. If no resolution or agreement is attained in such a scenario, then there is a tendency for class rivalry or class struggle which will directly qualify the dictum that "two wrongs can never make a right".

It is important to note that conflict as a phenomenon has formed part of day-to-day polemics which affects relationships. This phenomenon at the same time normally provoke the need for bilateral relation, however, its discussion has always been given priority from the perspective of modernity. Giving attention to the past during the pre-modern age, the enclave of this problem could also be seen as a measure of a problem that threatens the human and societal relationship. This paper aims to engage the principle of rivalry and jealousy as it occurred in the past via a mythological account of an age-long Edo tradition with that of the US-CHINA case. This is to bring to the fore the comparison of this tradition to that of the modern scenario to show the likeness and the divergence attached.

The parallel discussion of COVID-19 conflicts as engaged between the United States of America (USA) and the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) will therefore be done in comparison to a mythical narration of the same kind in Edo cosmological story through the socio-religious method.

Theoretical framework

This study adopted conflict theory to analyse the positions in the events postulated in this work. Conflict theory according to

*“Two wrongs don’t make a right”: a mythical narration of the
US-China Covid-19 saga through Edo*

Omololu⁴ is one of the sociological perspectives that focus on the inherent division of societies with social inequality and how the division give rise to different and competing interest. Omololu also noted that conflict theorists identified unequal groups with conflicting values and agendas, which makes them compete against one another. The constant competition between groups, therefore, forms the basis for the ever-changing nature of society.

This identification is peculiar to the incidents being looked at within the dimensions of U.S/CHINA and its relative comparison to that of the story exhibited in the mythical origin of Edo culture. The arguments focus on the inherent division within the groups in both societies and also highlight changes that take place within the system of their relationship and life experience.

Explanation of the Concept of Cosmology

Etymologically, cosmology is from the Greek words cosmos and logos which means universe and science. The term in general use is a branch of astronomy that involves the origin and evolution of the universe. It could then be explained as the science of the universe because the concept identifies the scientific study of things within the universe as a whole⁵.

⁴ Omololu O.O, “Sociological Theory” in *Sociology: A Contemporary Science of Human Interaction in Society*, ed. Olakunle A. Ogunbameru, (Ibadan:Penthouse Publication,2009), 355-356

⁵ Kanu I. Anthony., “The dimension of African cosmology”. *Filosofia Theoretical: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religion* 2 no2 (2013): 533

In the African worldview, cosmology entails methods through which Africans identify the origin of the world, things and the creature in it. The understanding of the Africans is that the relationship or interaction that ensued in their environment attracts explanation from mythical accounts that makes African origin valuable. However, some of the accounts could be systematic or not. In this way, most of the accounts are rendered as folklore, proverbs, songs and myths⁶.

Africans believe in revelation. Revelation is deemed within their religious consciousness. In their understanding, the acts of revelation which explain progressive dealings or limitation of things can be obtained through the situation of things in their environment. This experience attracts them to the works of nature like rivers, hills, rocks and forests in which several cosmological theories are constructed⁷. These theories in the African worldview are means of explaining the origin of God, man, rites, rituals, norms, rules and several incidences like sickness which permeates human reasoning and philosophy⁸. Religious cosmologies therefore describe the spatial layout of the universe and other elements of religion in the form of ritual, experiential, emotional, narrative, mythical, and doctrinal which are not done systematically. These attributes can be likened to Ninian Smart's seven dimensions which

⁶ Kanu, "African cosmology," 533-534

⁷ Awolalu J. Omosade and Dopamu P. Adelumo, *West African Traditional Religion*, (Ibadan: Macmillan, 2005), 68-70

⁸ Kanu, "African cosmology," 534

identified useful devices through which a rounded picture of religion can be gotten⁹.

Reflections into Edo Cosmological Creation Story

Edo is a city inhabited by the Bini, Esan, Owan and Afemai people. The city is also referred to as the Edo Ogo dynasty, which later developed into one of the important states in modern-day Nigeria. They speak the Edo language and their cosmological stories identify them as an ancient people with adorable traditions¹⁰.

In one of the Edo cosmological creation stories narrated by Awolalu and Dopamu¹¹, two divinities played a crucial role; these two divinities were Osanowa and Osanoha. They were both assigned by the Supreme Being, Osanobuwa. Osanowa was made to control the township and the humans occupying it, while Osanoha was put in charge of the bush and animals occupying it. The Supreme Being, Osanobuwa commissioned the two divinities in the acts of creation. Osanowa was commissioned to create man and Osanoha was commissioned to create animals. Osanoha became jealous of Osanowa because he thought Osanowa was mainly in charge of human affairs. He saw him as the power state holder.

⁹ Ezekiel O. Ajani, “Understanding Yoruba Religion through Ninian Smart’s Six Dimension of Religion” in Under the Shelter of Olodumare, ed Abogunrin et al. (Ibadan: John Archers, 2014), 140-143

¹⁰ Basil Davidson, Buah F.K. and Ade Ajayi J.F., *The Growth of African Civilization: A History of West Africa, 1000-1800*, (London: Longman, 1967), 125-130

¹¹ Awolalu and Dopamu, “West African Traditional Religion,” 61-62

When it was time to come down to the earth, Osanoha built a house full of diseases inside the earth to destroy the creation made by Osanowa because he was jealous. In the end, the creatures of Osanowa due to the rain that Osanoha brought down entered the house built by the same Osanoha and were seriously infected by the diseases inside. Due to annoyance, Osanowa in return, caused the creatures of Osanoha, that is, the animals, to be enemies of man. In line with this myth of creation, it is arguably assumed that COVID-19 became a buildup that increase the arguments in the misunderstanding between China and the USA. An international mess had over time been going on between China and USA, and this had amplified the misunderstanding. The feedback of this mess from China was taken to have been a conspiracy aligned with COVID-19 in world politics. The incidence of jealousy incubated in the narratives of the myth seems to be the type operating between the US and China due to their trade war.

Glimpse from International Politics and Rivalry War

The conflict between the United States of America and China in this regard has been a stalemate dictated by the ideological reflection of mercantilism. This conflict of interest is found not to be new in the history of the world as it is located within the ambience of feudal polity in Europe in the fifteen century. This was the period when the world engaged in the development of capitalism in different socio-economic formations at the expense of the common human beings (the proletariats).¹² It was recorded that the mercantilist of the period demanded the end of feudal anarchy in the shape of decentralized political

¹² Savur, "Sociology of conflict theory," 30

*“Two wrongs don’t make a right”: a mythical narration of the
US-China Covid-19 saga through Edo*

power. Also, it was noted that the growth of international trade led to rivalry between monopoly trading companies. Marxists of this time see conflict as a product of society rather than a causative factor of change.

Manorama thinks that conflict is a sponsored agenda that influences the development of capitalism in different socioeconomic formations or social structures. It shows that its manifestation has made it appear as a universal and permanent condition of society and the very essence of human nature¹³. This could be seen as Trump’s foreign policy presented by Michael Peter as the type that inflames polemic issues between the US and China in the area of rebuilding a permanent global framework for multilateral institutions based on economic and trading partnerships. Rudd sees this contest as a drum of war from both sides. This contest according to him may have aggravated and therefore reach a decisive stage in the 2020s. The contest according to Mahbubani is described as

The massive geopolitical contest in terms of a series of merging antinomies: America prizes freedom, China values freedom from chaos; America values strategic decisiveness, China values patience; America is becoming a society of lasting inequality, China a meritocracy; America has abandoned multilateralism, China welcomes it¹⁴.

¹³ Savur, “Sociology of conflict theory,” 31-33

¹⁴ Michael, A. Peter, *US-CHINA relations: Towards Strategic Partnerships in Education Philosophy* (Routledge: Taylor & Francis, 2021), 1-6

He also notes that the competition could be intensified in different camouflage that may serve as a method of unleashing the wrath of grievances. This intensity is what is previewed in the COVID-19 saga. This competition typically is in line and also explains the type of relationship that ensued between Osanoha and Osanowa in the myth that formed the background for this study. It should be noted that jealousy between the two parties was the bottom line in the disorganized relationship between the two divinities. Likewise, in the case of the US/CHINA, the act of jealousy associated with economic and trading partnerships is the factor responsible for the disagreement between the parties especially during Donald Trump's regime.

The Story Behind the US and CHINA Crisis

The crisis between US and CHINA as revealed by Yang¹⁵ started from the politics of trade with a heavy line of resentment. The market diplomacy of the two countries identified the controlling power of certain market values of China as against America's strength. The crisis had been earlier influenced by the disparity in how to find common ground on the issue of climate change. Towards this, the buildup was later defined sporadically on rivalries based on trade and technological prowess which favour China better than the US. The COVID-19 pandemic came up amidst this development, and the situation surrounding its spread thereafter set the pace for more unfounded truths that unnecessarily lighted the earlier rivalries between the two

¹⁵ Dali, L. Yang. (2021). The covid-19 Pandemic and the Estrangement of US-CHINA Relations", *Asia Perspective*. 45 no 1 (2021), 7-31.

“Two wrongs don’t make a right”: a mythical narration of the US-China Covid-19 saga through Edo

countries beyond proportion. The US during the period of this epidemic extended hands of fellowship to China by giving required help. This was intentional because the move was made to establish the fact that in giving despite China’s growing wealth and capabilities, they remained less developed and would look to the United States for help. It was noted that China resisted US offers in this regard. Subsequent overloaded effects of the virus on China were later considered to have met up with *schadenfreude* ¹⁶ (pleasure derived by someone from another person’s misfortune) from the side of the US, particularly on how the pandemic affects China’s national economy. Growing out of this jealousy is the racism and abuse, which tagged China as “the Real Sick Man of Asia”. This assertion, therefore, changed the content of the pandemic from the natural one to that of a political virus. It was established in the claim made in the [ActforAmerica.org/Action/Coronavirus](https://actforamerica.org/action/coronavirus) campaign that China lied in the face of this pandemic because they failed to account for its spread earlier and so they must be held accountable. This is a conspiracy that many claimed as an unfounded truth on the part of China.

Reflection of Edo Myth on US-CHINA Relationship

The argument for this reflection would be contextualized on the acts related to *schadenfreude*, that is, the pleasure derived by someone from another person’s misfortune. This act could be seen as a sign of envy and jealousy developed in a relationship. This development could be attributed to the

¹⁶ Dali, “The Covid-19 Pandemic.” 15

happiness of someone over the misfortune of others. The damage to Osanowa's creation in the mythical story and the effects of COVID-19 on the part of China is the major bottom line for the analysis of this act.

It is quite obvious in the stories of the US-CHINA and the Edo myth that temperament is the template that sets guidelines on the way they reacted to issues. Psychologically, temperament is validly seen as the pattern that will influence a person as long as he lives¹⁷. This temperament otherwise determines the strength and weakness of a person. The gene of any temperament is built on the "I" syndrome which is a force that provides the basic impulses of existence on how to seek to satisfy one's want¹⁸. The "I" syndrome would want to be dictatorial, selfish, and self-centred which will be in conflict with others and thus try to make something personal. This attribute is the foundation for acts of *schadenfreude* reflected in the two narratives. Due to Osanoha's disrepute acts, he found pleasure in endangering the creatures made by Osanowa and thus formalized unhealthy relationships within the cosmos. The US phobia of China's acts of domination in the area of health, trade and technology created the pleasure the US derived in tagging China as "the real sick man" and thus formulated several conspiracy theories that endanger the personality of China among the committee of nations.

Another area of this cosmological account to be taken into context is the theme of jealousy as expressed in the relations of Osanoha and Osanowa and how it relates to the emergence of the deadly COVID-19 from China to other parts of the world. One major thing that appears in Osanobuwa's mandate to his

¹⁷ Tim Lahaye, *Why you Act the Way you Do*. (USA: Tyndale, 1984), 22

¹⁸ Tim, " *Why you act*," 22-23

“Two wrongs don’t make a right”: a mythical narration of the US-China Covid-19 saga through Edo

divinities was to create and rule over the specific areas given to them for supervision. In this case, Osanowa was to create humans and rule over the townships while Osanoha was to create the animals of the bush and rule over them. This orderly arrangement was however destroyed when Osanoha became jealous of Osanowa and resorted to destroying his work as he was restive and unsatisfied with his position. In like manner in the world today, certain countries like the United States of America, Russia and China is highly developed and possess high economic, financial, technological and industrial know-how, have restrained relations with each other and are caught in a silent battle of tipping the scales and claiming the position of “rulership” as the “world power”.

The cold war between the United States of America and China is believed by some to have been the major cause of the COVID-19 outbreak which disrupted all sectors of the global economy. The claim that the coronavirus is a construct of the Chinese against the United States, its economic rival, could easily be traced to jealousy as one of the themes in the Edo cosmological story. It is the major reason for Osanoha’s antagonism towards Osanowa and his creation and also the root cause of China’s assumed claim for the spread of the deadly virus.

Apart from human conflict associated with this discussion, an area that also calls for analysis in the cosmology in line with COVID-19 is the account of how Osanowa in his anger at the actions of Osanoha caused human beings to eat the animals created by Osanoha. This if taken into consideration, can easily explain the cause of the indiscriminate consumption of many

unpopular animals, birds, worms and insects as food by the Chinese. This established the question of how this indiscriminate consumption of animals necessitated by Osanowa resulted in the emergence of coronavirus in China.

Conclusion

Two wrongs do not make a right as established in this work. The acts of jealousy explained so far in the myth of Osanowa and Osanoha and compared to that of US/CHINA relations in this work displayed that this omen is a bad one as it serves to create moments of conflicts when a society is endangering the manner of opposition in any demonstration of ego or sentiment. The discussion attempted in this work identifies the fact that jealousy is an age-long syndrome that existed during the primitive period. The truths of jealousy shown in this work underline unhealthy accusations that contravene the fringe benefits and freedom which God gave for human existence. The abuse of freedom and benefits could be seen as the root cause of disruption in human well-being that resulted in the loss of jobs, economic crises both local and international, domestic problems and deplorable situations that affect the welfare of the people. It is therefore important to note that room for cooperation should always be encouraged to allow peaceful cohabitation devoid of conflict that can ignite progressive human development.

