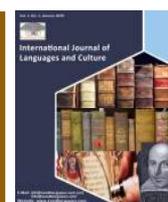




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## Casino Capitalism, Neoliberalism, the Politics of Power, and the Tiv Imborivungu Lottery of Lives' Path in Terhembra Shija's *The Siege The Saga*

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### Abstract

Contemporary modern concerns of Nigerians include casino forms of wealth acquisition, obviously in uncertain but quick luck-prone time, the politics of gaining power and authority, and the fervent desire to transform sorcery and magic of the moment, whether local or modern, to paths of economic advancement. These apprehensions have not only shaped the flow of value of this generation, full of the inconsistency of enchantment and disenchantment, enclosure and freedom, but as well have created new patterns of engagement of both local and modern codes and practices. These lead to the validation of the epistemological debris of imborivungu of the Tiv of central Nigeria in which the moral crisis of generating value through the sweepstake of human lives becomes complete in its modern mood that rhymes with modern casino sensibilities. This casino capitalism brink of betting seems on the edges of precipice especially for the youth but also including the elderly whose economic precocity may build up nostalgia for the future. This paper, using structuralism framework of analysis, attempts a localization of the casino capitalism phenomenon in parallel to the imborivungu path, interprets the shaping of the witchcraft of modernity from age-old sources and integrates the neoliberal violence of bet feelings and expression with respect to the political and economic intentions and actions of the two major characters, Shaagee and Targema, in Terhembra Shija's *The siege, The Saga*. The paper posits also that political spiritualities are inspired by casino capitalism due to its speculative gambling nature and in its roots in local forms of occult practices and need to be appropriately studied as they symbolically structure the modern world and its peoples.

**Keywords:** *Casino capitalism, Neoliberalism, The politics of power, The Tiv, The Tiv imborivungu, The Siege The Saga, Terhembra Shija*

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### Introduction

The bet mania is sweeping the Nigerian nation-state which is reddening with awkward feelings and impressions. Its packaging in enchantment of theoretical and practical seals creates an ambivalence of sort such that while it proposes wealth it also propagates poverty. Betting has become a non-stop daily activity, sometimes considered higher in priority than the regular labor force activity, and is undertaken with a zeal only witnessed during football activities. It may not be completely out of place to state that gambling is the second fastest emerging and growing industry in Nigerian, if we dare to call it an industry, the first being Pentecostal and Catholic magic-making crusades. Modern times are hard times with hard economies, a corollary of the hard hearts that pervade the ironically libertarian shape of the world. The threat of

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“emptying out” (Negri, 1999) of life in exchange for the zeal to gamble discountenances knowledge in place of luck. Through magic, political and economic powers are no longer gotten from work or appropriate choice making but from luck. Of the many types of gambling including social gambling, lotteries, charitable raffles, bingo, and betting on horse or dog races, the first type accumulates the greater wealth for the organizers and the government since it attracts all groups of people in society. It is obvious that casino managers hardly lose to gamblers since their coding system relies unpredictably on luck rather than knowledge. The suspense and adventure of the game motivates the punters to winning ways to gamble but it does not very often put them in winning ways. The main thrust of the gambling game is luck-in—uncertainty, an uncertainty that pervades all aspects of life and living in contemporary society. Casino capitalism is one of the hottest narratives of modernity and its roots may be traced to the harsh and hard economic times, the negation of religious, cultural and societal values, and the selfish desires of individuals and groups for social, political, economic, and religious aggrandizement. The world seems to have cursed itself in the cause of freeing from value entanglements, from being free in terms of rights and privileges, and in respect of modernity’s desires and dictates, all which change the narratives of time past.

One of the “metanarratives of modernity” (Englund and Leach, 2000) involves the nexus of neoliberalism, which poses as a path to equity and prosperity, a spirit of theory and practice of ideology, social, economic and political governmentality, which should free than submerge one to success but in ironic twist locates and integrates hidden things “erected on a form of mechanical solidarity in which us is generalized into me” (Comaroff and John, 1999). Neoliberalism abandons the Keynesian idea of a welfare state economics for a Chicago School of free trade, deregulation, and among others an array of economic and social strategies that make marginal communities more vulnerable to poverty, cultural defacement and unrest, and a modern situation where life exchange priority to market forces. Neoliberalism’s threat lies not in its attempt to ensure a flow of capital, which is fraught with inconsistency and long-term economic diminution, but in the freedom-prone freeing up of people to reinvent, in reverse gear, the ideas of productivity and consumption. Productivity has been overrun by consumption and with-it laxity of hard work, uncertainty in social, political, religious, and economic spheres of existence in society. Neoliberalism also eviscerates the majority that extends the woes of their low capital base to thoughts leading to strife, rape propelled by an idle mind from overzealous youth population, prioritization of consumption, the increasing fetishism of individuals in society and a time of increase in worship places, and among several other things generate possibilities for the emergence of all forms of civil violence and the creation of “phantom states” (Derrida, 1994).

This millennium, with its uncertainties, certainly engenders “speculations about the future as well as reckonings with the past” (Coronil, 2001). The modern person seems to become an object in the neoliberal-inspired “Second coming” of capitalism (Comaroff and John, 2001) and casino economic venture has become the subject. The subject-capitalism-being inanimate, without blood, rationality and human feelings resonate a crazy nature of consumerism and the expression of power because it is strengthened by invisible forces. Consumerism seems to tacitly replace productivity as the sensibility of the moment (excuses hinging on the exigency of mechanical instruments and on mediatization) such that an elder, a folklore consultant in Anihundu village, Gboko local government area of Benue state, Asase Sende, asked whether casino capitalism was poured into water for the modern man to drink or sprayed on air to inhale. This my view of subject/ object swap between humans and abstract things is contrary to Jean and John L Comaroff’s view that the “modern person is a subject made with objects” as a “Euro-cultural truism” (Comaroff and John, 2001). Modern humans however seem on the precipice of abstraction and on the border of rationality. It is true that humans now rely more on market forces.

The master narrator and ever assuming hero has provided yet another salvific theory and practice of checkmating the odd and even affairs of this world. Here again is a brand new form of historically renaissance enchantment which spurs the unsuspecting to the bait of neoliberal fashion. Many human beings no longer think of capitalism as a human-made invention to refocus it in its salvation message but rather capitalism now thinks and controls the direction for the human being-its creator. This is the point in which shocking waves of doubt permeate some conceptions and practices including the environment thus exuding disparagements for the future. Should this proposition stand any strong ground, then it shows that there is a real thought-swap at what may be human and between what may be abstract. Thinking may now be in the domain and directive of abstract things and ‘market forces’ especially when majority of the world’s inhabitants surrender their mental power for the “violence of abstraction” (Comaroff and John, 2018). This tips us to stand still to reconsider the position of modernity in its historical roots in witchcraft and the uncertainties of modern life and living to reassert models and practices in line with the vagueness that manufactures modernity. It is increasingly becoming a forward roll that majority of humans have exchanged the capacity to think selflessness and equitable relationships (that role is assigned to a vocal and powerful few) to a newly created world called the abstract world, a new world where consumption, previously denounced in the wake of the industrial revolution as a “disease” of the eighteen and nineteen centuries, quickly swap a soldierly about turn position with production and emerging first not

only as a strength of its wealth but as the “hallmark of modernity” (Binsbergen and Geschiere, 1999). The modern manner of thinking has also enlisted some recruits. An example is Deng Xiaoping, quoted in Dirlik, who got drowned in the “consuming geist” (Pavennel0, 2017) to campaign about “consumption (to be promoted) as a motor force of production” (Dirlik, 1996). What a wonderful achievement that will continue to shape the strengths and uncertainties of this world. The abstract is neither masculine and thus masochist nor feminine demanding freedom and rights to fit into the scheme of world affairs. The abstract is what is extracted from the human and her capital, the oscillation of “closure and inclusion”, the end of history and the consummation of history, the merging of indigenous spirituality with modernity, and the creation of consumerism space for the ‘second coming’ of capitalism. This is at the behest of abstract thought.

The Abstract World adds up to the existing Divine World, the Human World, the Animal World, the Mineral World and the Vegetable World. With post modernity and the occult in a coup-like coalition, The Abstract World seems to work out itself to the top and now is gradually carving out new, greater but downsizing patterns of alignment and partnership, a situation which is fording up other alternative patterns. A vocal minority and a dominating group of humans may be driving the abstraction ahead, ahead, as Nigerian football fans are wont to say about their team’s winning spirit, but it generally behooves the other(s) to invest in his/their abilities. While it may be considered natural the flow of continuities and discontinuities of values, ideas and practices, it is equally a fact that there are historical changes in humans, ideas, objects, subjects and priorities of value including the imborivungu of the Tiv of Central Nigeria.

## 2. The Tiv Imborivungu and the Legitimizing of Modernity

The Tiv Imborivungu is an historical artifact that reverberate modernity’s idea of an earlier traditional ideology, policy and governmentality. The Imborivungu is traditionally owned by a family or community but an individual can purchase it in the free market or have a facsimile copy carved by a visionary artist. The owner or possessor of the imborivungu wields social, economic, and political power. The imborivungu must however have to be given in sacrifice some intelligent members of the family to make it vibrant with the user or possessor, usually, but not always, a less intelligent member of the family. The member-to-use-the-imborivungu becomes a maharishi of sort in all areas of interest, the hero of the moment. It remains uncertain whether Comaroff and John (1994) concept of ‘contentious subjects and moral beings in the modern world’, their ‘Occult economies and the violence of abstraction’ or even ‘Theory from the South: Or, how Europe is Evolving Toward Africa,’ or all apply in contexts to the Tiv experience. Like capitalism, imborivungu is messianic in magical manifestations, (especially in respect of the one(s) to be sacrificed for other(s) to be empowered), is the consuming spirit of the time, evokes the invisible power, and have entered a pact of “rainbow coalitions” (Žižek, 1997) with modern forms, tradition and culture being in a constant flux. Thus, tradition is reinvented and modernity continues in its hallmark and hubristic mien. And the possession of imborivungu and the display of its social, economic and political power by endowed individuals did not just pass by uncontested especially by the victims—first the family members who are aggrieved and by extension the marginal community members directly or indirectly involved. This bores down to situations in Tivland where some aggrieved members of a family may become forced immigrants and may not return home for any event to show their displeasure to the fetishism of legal remedies, empowerment of a select member, the scapegoat’s phenomenon, and the violation of wide-ranging precept of choice, life and living. Sometimes there is an atmosphere of unrest in the family, the sort of civil strife witnessed in capitalism’s game of tacit display of wealth and poverty, as elders who take care of it may be attacked or humiliated, during the sudden death of a loved one, in some ways to show the displeasure either in the selection of the pharmakos or in the distribution of wealth. A family owns an imborivungu and in secrecy the initiates in the family decides who to sacrifice for the functioning of it and who to benefit from the sacrifice. In many cases, the one sacrificed is intelligent, socially accepted and strong in character in comparative contrast to the one who benefits who may lack qualities the uninitiated may project. This shows the secrecy shrouding activities of imborivungu. What makes the initiates or council to decide the choice of beneficiary is not the direct concern of the paper but may certainly be subject for exploration another time.

The witchcraft of Imborivungu is employed as a cultural practice to standardize political, social, and economic power in the society. Both hidden and revealing streams of power and wealth are traceable to the Imborivungu in the Tiv culture. According to Geertz (1973) “Culture is a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life.” The inherited conception of the imborivungu in Tiv society gravitates towards the politics of exclusion of other members from partaking of the family resources even as there may be vocal evidence to show the desire for equal distribution to agnate members.

The Tiv imborivungu is “a channel by which the water barrier between the seen and the unseen world is crossed” (Downes, 1971). It is an object that resolves the contradictions of the visible and the invisible worlds. It generates occult economies and has the potential for mysterious prosperity when understood and used appropriately. The imborivungu

is an object that operates in the dark and has not been discussed publicly or in critical texts until recently aided by the emergence of the printed texts and the digital media. With neoliberal ideas pushed in the front burner of literary and public discourse, a study such as this one may be undertaken to locate the imborivungu as a cultural mode that intersects with modern corporatized economies that rely heavily on market forces. It is unusual among the Tiv for any public discussion on the imborivungu to be carried out probably because it is an object of the dark world. The activities and activation of imborivungu are occult in nature but, once done in consensus, the imborivungu generates a synergy between the visible and the invisible aspect of life and living and makes the possessor powerful, influential, and wealthy. With imborivungu is the will to win and to actualize political, economic and social power. It is as highly priced among the traditional Tiv as capitalism is in the west. A synergy between the occult and the mundane can easily be imagined.

The dividing line between the occult and the mundane becomes problematic especially as political ambitions and the strong desire for economic advancement, even dominance, predominate. The neoliberal phenomenon of merging the 'seen and the unseen' aspects and the characteristics, uncertainties, abnormalities and restlessness are described collectively by Dardot Pierre and Christian Laval (2014) as the "new way of the world." Indigenous voices and models are active participants involved in the occult summit of this "new way of the world" to deliberate on the poison and assault economies, the murder medicine, the politics of power and authority, and the logic of knowledge dissemination capable of regulating and situating appropriately the lumpen, marginal communities, and the underprivileged in society. Applied folklorists, scholars of the liberal arts and social sciences therefore need to study, analyze and reveal the secrets of these practices in line with their logic of operation and disciplinary concerns.

The word casino refers to a building or space where gambling game of money is played. Since gambling impinges deeply on life and has become one major determinant of money acquisition, it may be taken as a source of sustaining life itself. Casino capitalism is the situation where economic activities are generated by government as she also generates revenue but are controlled by private owners. This takes place in public places, sometimes in an open space with the use of media gadgets and technologies. Neoliberalism refers to a theory and practice that allows political, social and economic freedom to thrive. Neoliberalism trusts in freedom, the rule of law, democratic values and the choice of attitudes, views and opinions of a person. In Neoliberalism is the valorization of bazaars, the market-like inclusion of otherwise outside institutions such as universities, religious institutions, trade unions, and households, the conception of maximized competitive activity which may sometime negate quality, the advancement of human capital, and deregulation among others. The politics of power is concerned with the activities of people as they use various means to amass wealth and authority. The Tiv Imborivungu is the representative image and object of a deceased father—figure used as a channel to connect the world of the dead and that of the living. The activation of imborivungu, an activity involving human sacrifice, transforms one to power and wealth. The text, *The siege, The Saga* captures the nuance of expression of the imborivungu and the politics thereto as a parallel to the modern casino capitalism. The two major characters in the novel engage each other in a political and economic competition to outclass the other to become the governor.

### 3. Literature Review

The emergence of casino capitalism rests on the prioritization of abstract patterns of life-ways and the assertion of neoliberal institutionalization of capital base. Capitalism introduced the valuable player in the name of casino that traverses the parts of the field ready for fantastic social and economic displays. Capitalism, which temporarily seem to trip off an opponent's leg along the last centuries resurfaced in what Jean and John (1999) describe as "the second coming of capitalism in its neoliberal, global manifestation" which dwells much on the game of luck and the implicit offloading of government functions and responsibilities. With the offloading of functions and responsibilities arise the idea of harmonization and globalization which will further separate the chaff (poor) from the grain (rich). The ironic twist in the character of capitalism, that of a global flow of wealth, is that its zeitgeist period is also characterized by uncertainties such as the withering of morality, the widening of gap between the rich and the poor, and among others the ghostly conversion of humans and their mental acumen in a contextual theft of life, to the thriving media, to animals, ideas, objects and the invisible elemental forces. This swap of identity, like life itself, has reinvented humanity's values in a new world and rejected history.

Castro (2017) laments that "the world has become a huge casino" "struck by a zombie plague" (Brown, 2014) full of fatal seductions that offer a "fleeting glimpse of a world at odds with the thematics of modernity (Brown, 2014). In his reflections on "the gigantic casino", Castro examined the financial crisis of the world and located the pitfall to selfish policies and theorizing. There is a subtle contest between life and the second coming of capitalism which brought with it ideological nuance that seems to carry with it death and birth, or even rebirth. Susan (1986) first used the term "casino capitalism" to debunk the emerging train of thought and practice characterized by the spirit of consumerism, risk taking and a resolve to the occult solutions for prosperity.

Jean and John (1999) see casino capitalism and all other sub-sets of capitalism as “messianic, millennial capitalism of the moment: a capitalism that presents itself as a gospel of salvation, a capitalism that, if rightly harnessed, is invested with the capacity wholly to transform the universe is invested with the capacity wholly to transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered”. However, the corollary of capitalism include civil strife, wars, kidnapping, insurgency, domestic violence, rape, child abuse, escalating prison population, occult theft or transaction of human parts, odd engagement, money magic as well as other “pyramid schemes and prosperity gospels” (Comaroff, 2000). It is in this overwhelming evidence against capitalism, “the hallmark of modernity” (Binsbergen and Geschiere, 1999) that Derrida (1994) sees it as “plagues of the new world order,” which differentiate and create “homogenization and difference” (Barber, 1992) and in Connelly and Kennedy’s (1994) view a “new feudalism,” with “less tangible ways of generating value” (Jean and John, 1999).

The value of life may be equated with the value of casino capitalism. This is because “life itself has become the object of” gambling (Comaroff, 2000) bearing the hardships of the moment that props up the “fatal ecstasy” (Comaroff, 2000) of instant returns and the strong desire for fast money. Life seems to be under siege ironically in a time of libertarian lift, a space which also seems to produce other contradicting concepts and uncertainties such as economic hardships, the transformation of sorcery and magic which Masando (2011) sees as “a mode of producing new forms of consciousness”, the emergence of hard hearts, the disparagement of morality and the erosion of rationalism, and the “fee-for-service” religions (Weller, 2001) among several other practical noises of the time. In this period of casino capitalism, “securing instant returns is often a matter of life and death. The failure to win the weekly draw was linked with more than one suicide in Britain in the wake of the introduction of national lottery in 1994; in 1999, the India Tribune reported that one of the biggest central Indian States, Madya Pradesh, was “caught in the vortex of lottery mania,” which had claimed several lives. Witnesses described “extreme enthusiasm among the jobless youth towards trying their luck to make a fast buck,” precisely the kind of fatal ecstasy classically associated with cargo cults and chiliastic movements (Cohn, 1959). More mundanely, efforts to enlist divine help in tipping the odds, from the Taiwanese countryside to the Kalahari fringe, have become a regular feature of what Weller terms “fee-for-service” religions. These are locally nuanced fantasies of abundance without effort, of beating capitalism at its own game by drawing a winning number at the behest of unseen forces. Once again, that invisible hand” (Jean and John, 2001).

There is also a change in the moral standpoint of humanity in the face of capitalism and neoliberalism. The Comaroffs state that “The change in the moral valence of gambling also has a public dimension. In a neoliberal climate where taxes are anathema to the majoritarian political center, lotteries and gaming levies have become a favored means of filling national coffers, of generating cultural and social assets, of finding soft monies in times of tough cutbacks. The defunct machinery of a growing number of welfare states, to be sure, is being turned by the wheel of fortune. With more and more governments and political parties depending on this source for quick revenue fixes, betting, says George Will, has “been transformed from a social disease”—subjected, not so long ago, to scrutiny at the hands of Harvard Medical School—“into social policy.” Once a dangerous sign of moral turpitude, “it is now marketed almost as a ‘patriotic duty.’” (Jean and John, 2001). The economy still records crisis after another. And this exposes the awkward nature of the world’s economic and political policies.

In South Africa, the “death of apartheid” which “fired utopian imagination” soon dies away as “liberation under neoliberal conditions has been marred by a disconcerting upsurge of violence, crime and disorder. The quest for democracy, the rule of law, prosperity, and civility threatens to dissolve into strife and recrimination, even political chaos ... everywhere there is an uneasy fusion of enfranchisement and exclusion” (Jean and John, 2018). In Nigeria, the bet rooms and spaces have become “cause of capital” (Jean and John, 2018) with all the turpitude turnovers that create a sense of the theft of life in bruising exchange with itself. The phenomenon capitalism may well be what Birgit Meyer (1998:26) calls “modernity’s dark side” and Geschiere (1997) describes as “the new witchcraft of wealth” which is produced deploying “shadow economies” (Shaw, 2001) or “occult economies” (Jean and John, 2018). These are hybrid arrangement from the visible and invisible worlds of the neoliberal world.

Neoliberalism is a term used to denote the presence of being free, the political, social and economic reforms, and the increase of general knowledge as against particular skills, the respect for other people’s opinions and behavior especially when different from yours, and the assertion of one’s choice held higher than the cultural codes, moral practices, and religious canons that predominate normal existence. It is this endless revolutionary breakthrough, probably in reverse gear that Dardot and Laval (2014) see this period as one of “entrepreneurial governance.” Neoliberalism is also in tandem with occult values full of soporific effects. On the margins of local codes to capitalize on the “new levels of global integration” (Jean and Jean, 2018) is the mode of action and value of imborivungu of the Tiv of Central Nigeria. With the localization of neoliberal capitalist phenomenon, the dividing space between the occult and the mundane becomes

problematical. Enclosure and freedom as much as wealth and poverty inseparably entangle each other and with-it lifelessness, social, political and moral turpitude, and uncertainties. Neoliberalism is also dependent on market forces, the opportunity of luck and inaccuracies of truth, thus, the lofty promises of neoliberalism and its capitalism godfather are full of Faustian fakeness designed for the assertion of difference not homogenization, for prosperity to few not for all and above all, to swap the position of humanity—to that of the poison and assault of objects, ideas and imperious intangible elements. Jean and John (2018) state in disapproval of neoliberalism that “Neoliberalism aspires ... to intensify the abstraction inherent in capitalism itself: to separate labor from its human context; to replace society with the market, to build a universe out of aggregated transactions. While it cannot succeed, its advance ... Has profoundly altered, if evenly in space and time, the phenomenology of being in the world”. Neoliberalism, in theory and practice, in its “second coming” reveals the inherent western politics of power and knowledge in its dominance configurations. Neoliberalism creates a culture that a culture that “re-visions persons not as producers from a particular community, but as consumers in a planetary marketplace: persons as ensembles of identity that owe less to history or society than to organically conceived human qualities” (Jean and John, 2018).

The strong desire for political power leads to the search for knowledge capable of arresting the elements that produce the power and this usually leads to a sharp patronage of witchcraft and the occult. The emerging corrosive character of some people, the global economic downturn, the appropriation of meaning and values, and the weakening of government’s function of being the center of authority and as economic necessitating agent, among several other reasons account for the dire search for ill—power and wealth. Pavanello (2017) states in this regard that “witchcraft thus becomes a kaleidoscope through which the emerging of new and glory phenomenon is observed on a horizon that is dominated by uncontrollable and violent power relations.” With the neoliberal free exercise of choices, rights and the search for power and economy growth, emerge the continuity of the occult and witchcraft, what Barry (2001) calls the “superior intellect” to preside and roll over wealth against poverty. Jean and John (2018) affirms in this regard similar to what we will encounter in *The Siege The Saga* that “post colonial Africa is replete with accounts of the way in which the rich and powerful use monstrous means and freakish familiars to appropriate the life force of their lesser compatriots in order to strengthen themselves or to satisfy consuming passion.” There is therefore the inclusion and the exclusion of the rich and the poor in power tussles and economic advancements. In this power game is also the ambivalence of freedom for all and the notion of enclosure for the underprivileged, an anomaly Moore and Todd (2001) describe as “a metacommentary on the ill—doings of capitalism and globalization.” The material realities of the moment call for magical interpretations.

The noise of the time is that of the use of magic and its corollary of political, social, economic, religious turbulent scapes and prosperity. Witchcraft once mainly thought of in negative terms, has surfaced with redemptive force, and whether with blood and tears, has fully participated in the dialectic of growth and change in real and imagined societies. This is normal and transitional. Bellagamba (2008) states that “ideas, practices and rituals—that in different times have been gathered under the more general concept of witchcraft—change through time together with the political, economic and cultural scenarios in which these practices, ideas and rituals have found and keep finding their place.” The various transformations in society such as neoliberalism, freedom from cultural and ethical restrictions and the parallel turbulent scapes augur for change and continuity that may be magical. This attests to the “elusive” nature of the word magic. Clark (2002) states: “what this label (magic) actually designated remains highly elusive since neither social scientists nor social historians have succeeded in defining it. This is because what magic has signified has varied from age to age and context to context. It is a classic example of a concept whose meaning and application are always a function of local circumstances.” The “local circumstances” motivate and replicate the Tiv imborivungu to produce what Comaroff and Comaroff (2001) call “local mystical economies” because they “take on the color of their surroundings.” This versatility draws our concern for the need to consciously study indigenous codes and practices in today’s modernity to unravel the pattern of flow of value and the practices thereto even to re-theorize concepts in modern times. Pavanello (2017) sees “witchcraft” as been “theorized as a crucial element of the exotic modernity of the post colonial world and also as a power instrument for accessing the circles within which globalization provides everybody more or less illusory, the commodities produced by the world economy.”

#### **4. The Tiv Imborivungu and the Invisible hand of Political and Economic Empowerment**

The Imborivungu is an object made from the “actual femur bone of a departed family father” Downes (1971). The bones of the departed father are beautifully decorated and maintained as a ‘holy’ relic and as an effective instrument for attaining success, power and prosperity in all spheres of human endeavor. A pioneer Tiv Writer, Akiga (1965) believes that the imborivungu could be used to put the land right but it could be used negatively too. Rites follow the maintenance of imborivungu involving the “use of human blood” and thus human being gets mysteriously killed in order that the

efficacy of the imborivungu might be sustained (Utov with Ioratim – Uba, 2000). The imborivungu is both symbolic and could be used in metaphoric terms. It could be referred to as “tar wase” (our land/world) which in depth semantics refers to its connecting chain between the humans and the “unseen powers beyond the mystic waters” (Downes, 1971). When the Tiv refers to “tar” (the land), it comprises “everything that is around him including the dual but invisible entities of the actual, visible and tangible, and no less actual, but invisible background world which contains the motive forces of life, the shadowy, unseen powers or spirits that can advance or retard the affairs of mankind” (Downes, 1971). The imborivungu aspect of the “tar” is both “sacred and awesome” and cannot be “looked upon without incurring grave risks” but may be seen “only by those responsible members of the family who are initiates of the ancestral Akombo abiam (ancestral skull rites) and so have ‘crossed the waters’ (Downes, 1971). The imborivungu is taken out “only at night on special occasions and used by the family elder” to blow out or “produce an echo-like sound” the sound of the “spirit voice” the “voice of the ancestor” (Downes, 1971). The statements above show that the imborivungu is most functional in the dark and is of the dark domain of existence, an advantage for it to easily align with the occult economies of neoliberal modernity. Since “occult practices are modes of interpretation and understanding” (Jean and John, 2001) an analysis of the way politicians and others use imborivungu to realize occult economy may not be out of place especially now that the imborivungu is beyond seen by non-initiates but seen only by the initiates. The Imborivungu has in neoliberal time became a subject of literary and digital presentation in the public glare. It has suddenly, in magical manifestation, proven itself free from restricted perusal, discourse and interpretation placed by a few by virtue of its reproduction in the print and digital media. Jean and John (2001) reiterate that “the recent explosion of electronic communications has greatly accelerated the dissemination of narratives of the supernatural, digging deep into the archive of gothic, transcultural, and futuristic exotica: of zombies, vampires, revenants, wiccans, genias, jinns and tokoloshes, all of them pulsing with the realistic half-life of digital animation.” Shija’s (2015) richly ethnic novel, *The Siege The Saga*, narrates “the tar” (world) that incorporates both material realities of the moment and the intangible hopes of “the new witchcraft of wealth” (Geschiere, 1997).

### 5. Terhemba Shija’s *The Siege, The Saga* and the Politics of Power and Occult Economy

There are disturbing parallel between casino capitalism and the search for political and economic power in *The Siege, The Saga*. While participants in the casino capitalism may call up the unseen forces to make them win a luck-driven gamble, the politician’s shady and shadowy side is revealed. The politicians and the bet maniacs are in a magic wagon that “promises to produce wealth with miraculously swiftness” (Jean and John, 2001). Both the politicians in *The Siege, The Saga* and the bet maniacs around public centres have accorded witchcraft an “enrichment” and offered it “yet another lease of life” (Fisy and Geschiere, 2001). Casino capitalism and neoliberalism’s conception of modern day values especially that of a freeway to freedom, has uplifted consumerism and downplayed productivity. The two are also bound by the means of medicine murder of modernity—that of neoliberal capitalism—and have all found witchcraft needful for all days for their imagined tomorrows because witchcraft too has transformed to “a coherent ideology for daily living” (Fortes, 1953) and “Sorcery is a major space of invention” (Kafferer, 2002). It gradually seems that with witchcraft, sorcery, economy, politics and their kin forces, there are no bifurcation but beautifying homogenization of ideas, concepts, elements and schemes that have found themselves very useful to one another and strive for neoliberal consolidation of modernity.

*The Siege The Saga* demonstrates that occult economic power and indeed all forms of wealth and prosperity could be nurtured to ferment for up to thirty years before its eventual realization. Targema, one of the top politicians aspiring for the governorship position had his elder brother, Agashua, a brilliant final year student of Geology, brutally killed by his father while looking for a big game for the very son who ironically submitted himself in the bush doing final fieldwork to be converted as the very human assumed for a chimpanzee to be killed. This event shows that humans are haunted as animals without their knowing. In the text too, we realize that “the mystery of power” (*The Siege* ...) makes it impossible, in Nigeria for votes cast to determine winners of elections but by the cleansing ceremony and approval of the custodians of “the mystery of political power.” One has to realize according to Chief Gega, Shaagee’s father, the king of the night and of the day, that “political power was first acquired in the spiritual world .... And every paraphernalia of power was sacred” (*The Siege* ...). The “ritual (for political power) is done in the secrecy of darkness” where “the imborivungu” is handed “to you”. This is the point the imborivungu is effective at the comprehensive society level. This shows that the place of power is an occult site, darkly obfuscated, and inspired by maniacal bet—like ambition and hopes. Political power can also be located within what the author calls “mystic frame”.

The disgusting thing about the workings of this “mystic frame” for the uninitiated particularly is that what got “paid for” are “innocent lives”. Chief Gesa sacrificed three children—two daughters, Movihinze (None is bad) bitten by a viper and Ashirumun (Let him/her accept) died of complications of child birth and Zaayem, (Go in a hurry) a university

undergraduate who was the only casualty of death in an accident to show not only his father's "potent witchcraft" but also to enable his son, Shaagee, win political power which "is not won merely by votes cast in the ballot" (71). In ironic twist, Chief Gesa's son and supposed beneficiary, Shaagee, wondered "who" would be the horror "beneficiary of success if your loved ones were sacrificed in the processed." Shaagee could visualize his father "shedding crocodile tears" on the day of burial of his siblings and felt a "murderer" who "robbed of life" as a "horrorful payment for his rise in power" and "the shame of his spiritual vulnerability had crushed him" (74) Shaagee felt "engaged in a gamble with death" when "an owl hooted" and his father told him "you don't have any choice." As Shaagee has been in politics he could not estimate the "efficacy of imborivungu, a totem gift to a favored son," one used beyond the family level. He was innocent that "the imborivungu of political power would be so highly priced" (74). He belatedly realized that his father had "initiated him into his rites of power acquisition in the spirit world and he had little or no room to maneuver out of the trap." In Nigeria, politics is a bet to power and prosperity. Politicians in Nigeria play the political bet, which is shrouded in occult practices with zeal and gusto, the political game being a competitive exercise.

The idea of "fee-for-service" (Weller, 1994) religions comes alive in *The Siege, The Saga* as Pastor Puusu (meaning Fanatism) visits Shaagee at a time of Shaagee's sleeplessness when his father told him of the sacrifices made and of the rites that he was to undertake naked with his wives. Pastor Puusu acknowledges Chief Gesa's commitment to the church even in old age saying "he does not fail to donate generously to the Lord's vineyard. He is a cheerful giver. The church loves him for that". This is in spite of Chief Gesa's nocturnal deals pitched against Pastor Puusu's "steadfast" spirit which made him to be "battling the forces of darkness in Gboko". Here lies Chief Gesa "the king of the dark" praised by Pastor Puusu, a "a man of God." Shaagee wonders, why Pastor Puusu mixes in the sacred values of Christianity, the religion of treasures in heaven with the values of great men of the world who merely extended their generosity to the church!" Thinking on and on, Shaagee's thoughts "reeled out the many contradictions that beset the Christian faith in the face of capitalism and poverty. He discovered that both the game of religion and politics were strictly those of the survival of the fittest".

Human sacrifices are sure to continue as success in wealth and power are to be strengthened. After the Ibiamegh rites at the Poor shrine were performed and "the imborivungu handed over to Shaagee" to show that "the elders and kingmakers of the people had spoken and acted accordingly" (80), Sharon, Shaagee's white wife from Newcastle died from cardiac arrest. As Shaagee's constituency wept, they also generate "sympathy" that led to a new lease of life in the political career" of Shaagee. He was "elected for two more tenures in the National Assembly". One need to play the bet game of sacrifice and luck seeking and with luck a win comes your way. On the side of Targema, his brilliant elder brother's death and his father's incarceration, events of consume and bless-capitalist ethos arise from running away of imborivungu by Targema's mother from Mbagwaza, the brilliance of Agashua who got killed by his father Tsavnum who was then incarcerated culminated in the attainment of political leadership "as long as the imborivungu was still in their custody" and all "cleansing ceremony" done. He was sure to emerge as a political leader.

## 6. Conclusion

The modern world is full of hybrid thoughts and actions on the present values in society. It is the overriding spirit of the moment that neoliberal freedom and prosperity is prevalent and highly cherished and seen as a security of sort but with it is the violent coalition of modern magic—precisely the recourse to the unseen forces that are unconventional ways of social, economic and political engagements—which create forms of insecurity, corrosion of character, and an awesome wealth and poverty rolled together in an uncertain bet world. Deeper reflections may however be called to attention, building on Heidegger's idea of "being-within-the-world" and that of the "crisis of the present" (C), Ernesto De Martino sees the new values and actions as "reflections of our historical debt as yet unpaid to that magic age of history in which the being within the world was still the "in-fieri" human option when the presence was something to be aimed for a task, a drama and a problem. We are prisoners of the cultural limitation that makes us think of a limited presence as something sinful. In the magic world, however, it is precisely this limited presence that provides a salvation" (De Martino, 2015). There are connecting links between tradition, culture and modernity playing them out to affirm them and or refute their relevance in history. Time is the most powerful politician, theorist, occult practitioner and is sure to unravel itself in history. The wedding of the weird and wonderful and the familiar mesmerize our fascinations and grind down our hopes and dreams in thoughts about the future.

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