

# RITUALS, BLOOD AND DEATH, THE SPIRITUAL SIDE OF ASO VILLA

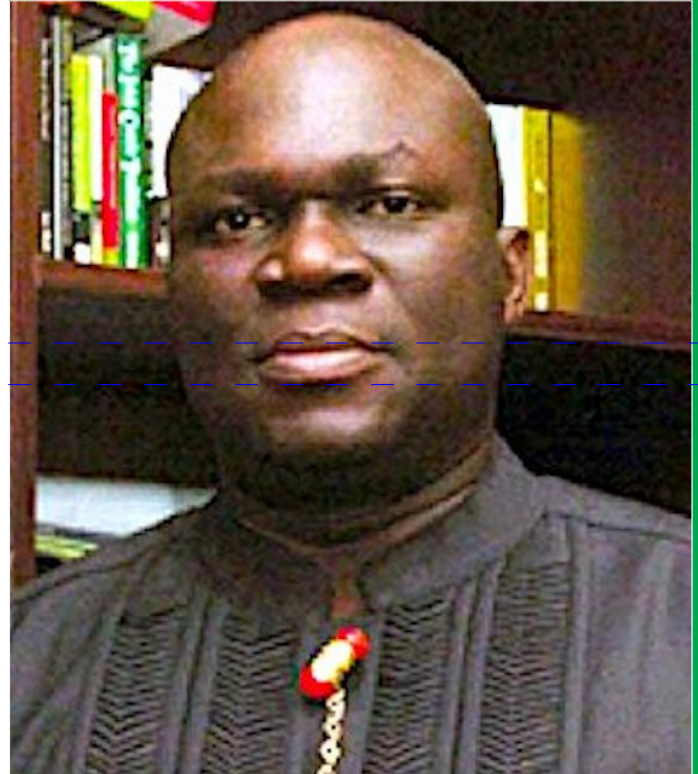
BY REUBEN ABATI

People tend to be alarmed when the Nigerian Presidency takes certain decisions. They don't think the decision makes sense. Sometimes, they wonder if something has not gone wrong with the thinking process at that highest level of the country.

I have heard people insist that there is some form of witchcraft at work in the country's seat of government. I am ordinarily not a superstitious person, but working in the Villa, I eventually became convinced that there must be something supernatural about power and closeness to it. I'll start with a personal testimony. I was given an apartment to live in inside the Villa. It was furnished and equipped. But when my son, Michael arrived, one of my brothers came with a pastor who was supposed to stay in the apartment. But the man refused claiming that the Villa was full of evil spirits and that there would soon be a fire accident in the apartment. He complained about too much human sacrifice around the Villa and advised that my family must never sleep overnight inside the Villa. I thought the man was talking nonsense and he wanted the luxury of a hotel accommodation. But he turned out to be right.

The day I hosted family friends in that apartment and they slept overnight, there was indeed a fire accident. The guests escaped and they were so thankful. Not long after, the President's physician living two compounds away had a fire accident in his home. He and his children could have died. He escaped with bruises. Around the Villa while I was there, someone always died or their relations died. I can confirm that every principal officer suffered one tragedy or the other; it was as if you needed to sacrifice something to remain on duty inside that environment. Even some of the women became merchants of dildo because they had suffered a special kind of death in their homes (I am sorry to reveal this) and many of the men complained about something that had died below their waists too. The ones who did not have such misfortune had one ailment or the other that they had to nurse. From cancer to brain and prostate surgery and whatever, the Villa was a hospital full of agonizing patients.

I recall the example of one particular man, an asset to the Jonathan Presidency who practically ran away from the Villa. He said he needed to save his life. He was quite certain that if he continued to hang around, he would die. I can't talk about colleagues who lost daughters and sons, brothers and uncles, mothers and fathers, and the many obituaries that we issued. Even the President was



multiply bereaved. His wife, Mama Peace was in and out of hospital at a point, undergoing many surgeries. You may have forgotten but after her husband lost the election and he conceded victory, all her ailments vanished, all scheduled surgeries were found to be no longer necessary and since then she has been hale and hearty. By the same token, all those our colleagues who used to come to work to complain about a certain death beneath their waists and who relied on videos and other instruments to entertain wives (take it easy boys, I don't mean nay harm, I am writing!), have all experienced a re-awakening.

Everyone who went under the blade has received miraculous healing, and we are happy to be out of that place. But others were not so lucky. They died. There were days when convoys ran into ditches and lives were lost. In Norway, our helicopter almost crashed into a mountain. That was the first time I saw the President panicking, The weather was all so hazy and he just kept saying it would not be nice for the President of a country to die in a helicopter crash due to pilot miscalculations. The President went into a prayer mode. We survived. In Kenya once, we had a bird strike. The plane had to be recalled and we were already airborne with the plane acting like it would crash. During the 2015 election

campaigns, our aircraft refused to start on more than one occasion. The aircraft just went dead. On some other occasions, we were stoned and directly targeted for evil. I really don't envy the people who work in Aso Villa, the seat of Nigeria's Presidency. For about six months, I couldn't even breathe properly. For another two months, I was on crutches. But I considered myself far luckier than the others who were either nursing a terminal disease or who could not get it up.

When Presidents make mistakes, they are probably victims of a force higher than what we can imagine. Every student of Aso Villa politics would readily admit that when people get in there, they actually become something else. They act like they are under a spell. When you issue a well-crafted statement, the public accepts it wrongly. When the President makes a speech and he truly means well, the speech is interpreted wrongly by the public. When a policy is introduced, somehow, something just goes wrong. In our days, a lot of people used to complain that the APC people were fighting us spiritually and that there was a witchcraft dimension to the governance process in Nigeria. But the APC folks now in power are dealing with the same demons. Since Buhari government assumed office, it has been one mistake after another. Those mistakes don't look normal, the same way they didn't look normal under President Jonathan. I am therefore convinced that there is an evil spell enveloping this country. We need to rescue Nigeria from the forces of darkness. Aso Villa should be converted into a spiritual museum, and abandoned.

Should I become President of Nigeria tomorrow, I will build a new Presidential Villa: a Villa that will be dedicated to the all-conquering Almighty, and where powers and principalities cannot hold sway. But it is not about buildings and space, not so? It is about the people who go to the highest levels in Nigeria. I really don't quite believe in superstitions, but I am tempted to suggest that this is indeed a country in need of prayers. We should pray before people pack their things into Aso Villa. We should ask God to guide us before we appoint ministers. We should, to put it in technocratic language, advise that the people should be very vigilant. We have all failed so far, that crucial test of vigilance. We should have a Presidential Villa where a President can afford to be human and free. In the White House, in the United States, Presidents live like normal human beings. In Aso Villa, that is impossible. They'd have to surround themselves with cooks from their villages, bodyguards from their mother's clans and friends they can trust. It should be possible to be President of Nigeria without having to look

behind one's shoulders.

But we are not yet there. So, how do we run a Presidency where the man in the saddle can only drink water served by his kinsman? No. How can we possibly run a Presidency where every President proclaims faith in Nigeria but they are better off in the company of relatives and kinsmen? No. We need as Presidents men and women who are willing to be Nigerians. No Nigerian President should be in spiritual bondage because he belongs to all of us and to nobody. Now let me go back to the spiritual dimension. A colleague once told me that I was the most naïve person around the place. I thought I was a bright, smart, professional doing my bit and enjoying the President's confidence. I spelled it out. But what I got in response was that I was coming to the villa using Lux soap, but that most people around the place always bathed in the morning with blood. Goat blood. Ram blood. Whatever animal blood. I argued. He said there were



persons in the Villa walking upside down, head to the ground. I screamed. Everybody looked normal to me. But I soon began to suspect that I was in a strange environment indeed. Every position change was an opportunity for warfare. Civil servants are very nice people; they obey orders, but they are not very nice when they fight over personal interests.

The President is most affected by the atmosphere around him. He can make wrong decisions based on the cloud of evil around him. Even when he means well and he has taken time to address all possible outcomes, he could get on the wrong side of the public. A colleague called me one day and told me a story about how a decision had been taken in the spiritual realm about the Nigerian government. He talked about the spirit of error, and how every step taken by the administration would appear to the public like an error. He didn't resign on that basis but his words proved prophetic. I see the same story being re-enacted. Aso Villa is in urgent need of redemption. I never slept in the apartment they gave me in that Villa for an hour.