

# CONFLITS SOCIORELIGIEUX EN MILIEU CARCERAL DE COTONOU : ENTRE ORDRE ET DESORDRE

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## **Abstract**

*The aim of this production is to explain the determinants of religious conflicts in prisons in Africa, particularly in Benin. Interactions between recluses on the one hand, recluses and prison administration on the other hand are sometimes sources of conflict. At the first level, insufficient interreligious dialogue, and the intrigues of religious leaders to redirect common interests to their own community, account for 53% of the tensions between religious communities. At the second level, there are latent tensions between the administration and the endogenous religious community which, given its practices, constitute a risk of insecurity in the penitentiary institution. These results were obtained at the Cotonou Civil Prison, using a combination of two sampling techniques: reasoned choice and snowball technique. The main data collection technique used is semi-directive interviewing. Approximate survey units are of two types: religious (responsible and faithful) and members of the administration (the commissioner, the chief brigade, the chief guard, the supervisors, the auxiliaries of justice). The sample thus constituted has a size of 86 informants.*

**Keywords:** *prison, order, disorder, tensions, Cotonou.*

## **Introduction**

Beyond any preconceived ideas that one might have of prison, religion occupies an important place, but rarely as a problem. Religion is therefore an easily accessible space in the prison environment which enjoys an organization and trust from the prison administration. For the most part, it helps reduce conflict. Religion is above all a support for prisoners. It is a space where

relations are normalized, a possibility of integration into a protective group in a universe of illness, violence and death. Finally, religion constitutes a hope of remission, a means of escaping from lost time, a resource for penance. If the religious problems remain as important as the idleness, the overcrowding, the violence and the impotence which make the daily life of the prisoner, the spiritual demand is not less. The intensification of practices is observed among those who had religious roots before their detention, but also among those who discovered God there and wanted to end him (R. Dawkins, 2009). Guilt and the search for forgiveness lead to “Carrying out one's religious duties would be a way of 'wiping the slate clean' or 'starting from scratch'. [...] sometimes an instrument for getting out of prison” (C. Béraud, C. de Galembert, C. Rostaing, 2013, 2016). The oblivion in which certain recluses find themselves (E. Goffman, 1968, p. 41), their economically precarious situation can also lead them to the quest for solidarity through cultural, national, ethnic, socio-professional or religious affinities. During an intervention at a symposium, O. Kies (2015) notes that the most fragile recluses called “indigents”, who have no contact with their family, are often looked after by their fellow prisoners who accompany them socially. And economically. Among these "protectors" are often religious. It is primarily through an economic and social approach that they try to bring rather fragile individuals into the group. Religious activities and religious events in the prison environment make it possible to physically escape from the cell and to escape mentally.

So, to evoke the idea of conflict is to refer the meaning to wars, social demonstrations or at least strikes. In the prison environment, it will not be a question of the use of weapons of war but of the arrangement of words, positions, intentions which give meaning to the spirit. The question of secularism, the basis of religious coexistence, of living together in Benin, even if it recurrently and controversially appears in the public debate in other places, it is no less latent (The religious conflicts recorded

in the civil prison of Cotonou appear in two forms: manifest and latent. The form sometimes depends on the context, on the dexterity of the actors for the management of the conflict. The prison authorities sometimes play with the moods of the antagonists by putting themselves in a centrist position or not, as the case may be, since their positions depend on it) in the reclusive life of Cotonou. The development of egocentric strategies with a communitarian goal and the social impertinence of the judiciary are determining elements of the religious conflicts observed in the prison environment of Cotonou. So, are conflicts of a religious dimension in the prison environment dangerous or are they social conflicts like any other? To answer this question, we have chosen to focus on the following aspects: conflicts related to the (re)distribution of donations, conflicts related to the social impertinence of the judiciary and conflicts related to the personal convenience of prison authorities.

## **1. Material And Methodological Corpus**

The field survey (D. Cefai, 2003), although it is difficult, longer and more expensive, especially in closed environments (Ph. Combessie, 2009), inspires and constitutes the first data verification tool. This monographic preliminary has therefore made it possible to identify ten (10) prisons in Benin. These are the prison of Abomey, Abomey-Calavi, Akpro-Misséréte, Cotonou, Kandi, Lokossa, Natitingou, Ouidah, Parakou and Porto-Novo. Given the special status of the city of Cotonou, its socio-economic dynamics and the criteria noted above by these authors, the choice is made for the civil prison of Cotonou. It is located in the 11th arrondissement of the city.

Historically, the prison estate was a warehouse and belonged to the KEKE family. But around 1954, it was requisitioned to house the civil prison of Cotonou. The warehouses are then transformed to accommodate a workforce capacity of four hundred (400) recluse at most. But today, the workforce is

soaring and sometimes reaches four (04) times the initial capacity (Prison Authority, 49 years old, 07/21/2016). Thus, the fluctuation of the workforce is totally dependent on entries and exits. The prison population includes, among others, adult and minor women and also adult and minor men. This detention center brings together individuals from various backgrounds in Benin, of various nationalities and of various religious affiliations.

Previous writings on a research subject constitute a methodological approach that is essential for any researcher. It is in this perspective that A. Ouellet (1980, p. 147) notes that “the literature review is the cornerstone of the systematic organization of research. No serious researcher would dare to undertake research without having first checked the state of the question”. In line with this scientific requirement, we obtained written information from two sources, namely documentary research and research via the internet. The documentary research made it possible to make available knowledge from written sources that shed light on the religious fact in prison environments. It helped, among other things, to have information for the triangulation of data (establishment of reading sheet).

To successfully collect information, we first defined the research population, carried out the sampling, specified the techniques to be used and finally developed the instruments for collecting data and analyzing the results.

The biographical interview, whether defined as non-directive (G. Michelat, 1975), comprehensive (J.-C. Kaufmann, 1996), ethnographic (S. Beaud, 1996), in-depth (D. Demazière and C. Dubar, 2004), has thus become the preferred method. M. Grawitz (2001, p. 644) defines the interview in social science research as being “a process of scientific investigation, using a process of vertical communication, to gather information, in relation to the fixed goal”. It is this technique of data collection

that proved important in the present work. Several authors such as S. Beaud and F. Weber (2003, p. 203) have also taken the same path : “By carrying out an in-depth interview, you will carry out real sociological work”. Driven by the concern to collect as much information as possible in relation to the objectives set, we coupled the surveys by questionnaires with the in-depth and semi-structured interviews. Thus, we interviewed individuals from samples formed in the two research areas, namely the prison area and the judicial area.

The intellectual but also social and institutional mold of interactionism is located in the sociology department of the University of Chicago where, for decades, a social object was formed based on interactions and exchanges between individuals (A. Abbott, 1999). This characterization makes it possible, in fact, to account for the different ways of joining a tradition, the “sociological tradition of Chicago” (J.-M. Chapoulie, 2001).

Methodological pluralism highlights in this tradition the supposed central role of participant observation in the development of interactionism but has been reassessed, returned by some to the rank of mythology (H. Blumer, 1983, 1984 ; J. R. Platt, 1992, 1995), tempered or rectified by others (D. Cefaï, 2003). From this framework, the materials gathered by individuals or personal documents, biographical accounts, the collection of semi-directive interviews are necessary in this production with privileged methods in order to slip into the universe of experiences and to apprehend the interpretive sketches of the actors. So, participant observation made it possible to closely experience religious practices among PCC detainees in their specificities, to note the deeds and gestures of detainees and the judiciary in court hearings in order to complete the data not revealed during the interviews.

The research focuses on the actors involved directly or indirectly in religious life at the PCC. The collection of empirical data is

made from religious leaders, the faithful members of these religious communities and the prison administration and some agents of the judicial world. The sample thus constituted has a size of 86 informants.

The constitution of the sampling is made from a combination of three techniques. Thus, a recourse is made to the technique by reasoned choice, that is to say to notice those who organize the prayer in the buildings, those who frequent the sacristy or the mosque. The technique of a priori sampling which is a sampling by a priori judgment. It consists of selecting individuals who are believed, before questioning them, to have information on religious practices, religious knowledge, the functioning and organization of the legal system, the conflicts and disputes that occur in the prison environment of Cotonou, the possible escapes and the motives used, the various practices and religious objects prohibited in the prison, etc. Finally, the quota sampling technique, which consists of studying the structure of the population according to criteria chosen empirically. Here, it is a question of criteria such as age, profession, religious affiliation and prison status.

## **2. Different Religious Communities Present**

The empirical data revealed several religious communities in the civil prison of Cotonou : Catholic, Evangelical, Islam, Celestial Christianity, Vodouism and Agnostics. However, it is important to clarify certain groupings which consist in the categorization of religions. The evangelical community includes: Renaissance Union of Man in Christ (URHC), Evangelical Mission of Faith (MEF), Church Assembly of God, Pentecostal Church of Faith, Evangelical Mission of Freedmen (MEA), Church of Christ, Church of Christ Apostolic, Eglise Vie Profonde, Eglise Biblique de Saint Esprit, Mountain of Fire, Family Bible Church, Protestant Methodist Church of Benin (EPMB), Protestant Methodist Church of Benin Conference (EPMBC),

Biblical Assembly of Christians (ABC), Assembly of Disciples of Christ (ADC), Christ Ascension Church (CAC), Evangelical Apostolic Church (EAE).

Since the advent in 2009 of a new movement in the Beninese religious space, several positions have been taken both at the level of the Roman Catholic Church and at the level of the regime of former President Yayi Boni. The movement called the Catholic Church of Gbanamè, with its appearance, upsets the traditional presence of the Roman Catholic Church. Despite this divergence in general society, the faithful of the two communities find themselves as brothers in the same worship, in the same prayer in the prison environment of Cotonou. This change in behavior shows that the walls sometimes exercise influence, whether psychological or religious.

In the second category, celestial Christianity and the cherubim seraphim come together to form the community of celestials. During our stay, we did not attend or observe the vodouists performing religious ceremonies. As for the agnostics, they constitute a minority community compared to other communities where the voice of the majority is a refuge for the weak in this milieu. They do their singing class every fortnight. During a singing class, we did not notice the presence of any female prisoners. The reason given is that women are not interested in singing classes.

### ***2.1. Religious Practices In A Closed Environment***

Practice and belief are inseparable and one cannot be understood without the other. In the civil prison of Cotonou, a strong abundance of religious practices prevails. Thus, the religious behavior of prisoners offers two versions. The first is shown by Durkheim (1968, p. 60) where religious beliefs are often common to a determined community in a spirit of belonging and practices of solidarity. The second makes it possible to distinguish three major religious tendencies reflected in

religious practices among prisoners. These are : Identity Christianity where one identifies with practices ; confessional Christianity which induces regular religious practice and whose recourse is made to a personal god and finally secular humanism which is made up of non-believing, indifferent and non-practicing individuals. This typology referred to by the author is always applicable in a specific and difficult context.

Indeed, just outside the parlor is a chapel where it is written at the entrance “Archdiocese of Cotonou - Chapel - Civil Prison“. Its area is estimated at 96 m<sup>2</sup>. Inside, there are two rows of benches and then an altar. A space is reserved to the right of the altar for the choir. This chapel is framed from right to left by the mosque and then a building that serves as a sacristy and library. The area of the mosque is somewhat smaller than that of the chapel.

This chapel is a “flying” chapel in the sense that the religious communities, namely Catholic, celestial, evangelical and agnostic, share the same office for worship or prayer in turn according to a well-defined program. Around this chapel is a market that comes alive from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. In a district called “the minister's building“, a space is set up for the prayer of Muslims. As Millet (1970, p. 85) showed, “... when I go back to my cell, alone with God, I concentrate, I regain my strength”. The prayers are organized in the buildings by the faithful of different communities. Workshops are being taken over by small groups of those benefiting from the second shutdown.

## ***2.2. Religious Practices Among Catholics***

As practices we have recorded the celebration of masses where we can notice the collection, the procession from the sacristy to the chapel, the way of the cross following a well-defined itinerary, the organization of prayers, fasting, the ceremony of ashes, confession sessions, choir rehearsal, Lent, novenas to solve a problem or to help someone find a solution to their

problems... Prayers are made right after each building closes at 6 p.m. At each beginning and end of mass, we notice the entry and exit of women in single file from or to their neighborhood.

2.3. *Religious Practices Among Evangelicals* Pastors come from outside for services and prayers. Prayers in the chapel are held on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 9 :30 a.m. to 12 :30 p.m. ; Fridays and Wednesdays from 11 :30 a.m. to 12 :30 p.m. and finally Sundays from 10 :30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

In the afternoon of Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., prayers are also organized. During these prayers, two faithful pass in each row and bench by bench, a basket in hand to collect collections. In addition to all this, there are choir rehearsals that are organized. From 09 to 11 Dec. last, there is a crusade which made it possible to pass through the ghettos, the buildings, the straw huts to regroup the faithful. Between two prayers or masses in the chapel, sound instruments are picked up or placed each time this or that community has a prayer or a mass to organize.

In the security system of the house, we speak of first, second or third closing. After the first closure, that is to say the one which consists in closing all the prisoners except a certain number of leaders, a small evangelical group of leaders forms for the prayer in a sewing workshop called “Rotary“. At the second closure of inmates of a certain even slightly higher responsibility, the same scene is repeated and so on.

#### ***2.4. Religious Practices Among Muslims***

The mosque inside the Cotonou civil prison is practically adjoining the chapel. Despite the availability of time, the daily prayers which constitute the five pillars of Islam are not respected at least the schedules. The 6 a.m. prayer at the mosque is postponed to 7 a.m. or even 8 a.m. since the buildings open from 8 a.m. Very early on, the call of the muezzin shows that it will be necessary to prepare for prayer. That of 7 p.m. is made

not at the mosque but in each of the buildings where there are Muslims because the closing begins at 6 p.m. sharp. Thus, Muslims are unable to honor with ablution because of the device of the institution.

Other practices include fasting during the month of Ramadan, the "zakat" that is to say a tax on the rich that allows daily feeding of all the prisoners in the house, purgatory prayers, "zikrit" "which consist of singing the praise of God not like Christians, reading the Koran, taking off your shoes before entering the mosque. Aegerter (1950, p. 112) already noted that Muslim worship is simple. Essentially, it boils down to a few pious practices, referred to as the pillars of Islam : "To confess that he is only a god, Allah, and that Mohammad is his prophet; engage in religious exercises, prayers, genuflections, greetings to Mecca at regular times; giving alms, which today means paying a kind of tax intended for the poor; practicing fasts which are now grouped in the month of Ramadan; perform, at least once in his life, the pilgrimage to Mecca".

In the mosque, the women must stay behind the men. Women are only allowed to attend Friday prayers at 2 p.m. They will necessarily have to put on the scarves before leaving the women's quarters since they are not allowed to go out outside of visits and prayers. Likewise, during the Tabaski celebrations, it is not authorized to carry out immolation in the prison. Either the donors do the rest and bring the meat, or a few Muslim worshipers are allowed out of the prison to kill the animal right next to the prison.

### ***2.5. Religious Practices Among Celestials***

Religious manifestations such as thanksgiving, Lent, requests for mass for the dead, the faithful who drape themselves in their white boubou escaped from the respective ranks, works of spiritual combat which are prohibited but which are carried out sometimes arouse tensions. Masses and prayers are organized on

Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., Sundays from 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. and then the first Thursdays of the month from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The choir singing classes are organized on Thursdays from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. then Saturdays from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. Vision and quarantine practices commonly called abogloè are strictly prohibited given the uses that can be made of them. It should also be noted that colored candles are prohibited. Only white colored candles are allowed. There is a small reserved space which constitutes the sacred forest or the sanctuary for the celestials. This space is commonly called “zoungbomè“. It is a place of ritual and is strictly forbidden to women.

### ***2.6. Religious Practices Among The Eckists***

They appear every fortnight of the month. Thus, at each session, there are spiritual exercises such as discussion classes which do not exceed 1 hour and songs of "HU" which last at most 20 hours. New members do not exceed 5 minutes in this communication exercise. Apart from this appointment, each individual is invited to experience God. Before going to bed, each Eckiste does a meditation of 10 to 20 minutes and around 5 am the same exercise resumes.

### ***2.7. Religious Practices Among Vodouists***

Given religious and cultural realities, they are not allowed to live their religion in complete freedom. In Benin, the date of January 10 is granted to followers of Vodoun to manifest their faith. Any religious event outside this date or any sacrifice is prohibited. Specially, on January 10, 201, they are authorized to immolate a rooster with some other elements previously proscribed under the vigilance of the guards. At the end of the ceremony, they went to greet, as usual, all the prison authorities with a rosary of wishes (Chef Brigade, 2016). Precedents have shown that it was enough to kill a rooster, a sheep or an ox in the civil prison of Cotonou for there to be an escape the next day. Similarly, any element used in the composition of gray-gris such as black soap,

colored candles, kola, kaolin, statuettes, leaves (only some are authorized), to name a few, are strictly prohibited. There may be many things on this earth that no science has yet been able to explain.

### **3. Conflict-Oriented Distribution**

If the practice of religion can lead to tensions, it is nonetheless useful and necessary for many prisoners. And yet! The various religious communities, specifically, receive donations of all kinds from outside. On arrival, the head warden, in collaboration with the storekeeper, calls on the religious leaders for the distribution of donations. Previously, the donors had already made contact with a faithful inmate from the same religious community. The latter informs the other persons in charge of the situation in order to take the necessary measures. The first intentions lie with the aim of an unequal distribution. The storekeeper, in order to satisfy everyone and without frustration, proceeds by an egalitarian distribution. This procedural mode is thus opposed to the interests of the faithful belonging to the same community as the donors. In this context, the storekeeper notes: " I do not have a choice. This is not the first time that we have received donations from outside. We have always done it this way and each time they find themselves in pole position, it's stories that sometimes lead to fights. They seek to take more than others. However, they forget that they can also find themselves tomorrow in a weak position. It's a pity that it is the so-called believers who act like this" (Germain, 36 years old, 1st prison experience, Rape, 4th year in prison).

The intrigues of each other are immediately identified and despite the consultations, the frustrations are not dissipated. In a prison setting, religious affiliation is often a source of security and identity. Thus, the administration uses adaptation, adjustment or arrangement resources in its conflict management. So, the dissatisfactions registered during the distribution of the

gifts develop as a background star in the religious staffs. Even if the conflict is not openly declared and adopts a latent appearance, it is nonetheless to observe the manifestations or the implications of these conflicts in the communities. The speeches, the logics on such a religious leader or on the whole community appear in the discussions and the exchanges. A prisoner gives her impressions as follows : “Each time, they always find something to say when it comes to the distribution of the donations sent to us. We were sent balls of fabric which were distributed equally for all the religious communities represented. This is a principle that has always been adopted in order to avoid frustrations. But when it comes to members of their community sending donations, they develop hysterical behavior towards other communities. It is not good especially that we are religious leaders. Even their own followers disagree with them. I had discussed this with a few who said that donations are often limited to those in charge. The faithful do not even see the color of the donations” (Eugénie, 31 years old, 1st prison experience, Fraud, 3rd year of detention).

This conflict of interest mobilizes resources both from the administration and from officials who are not directly involved or who have taken a step back in the circle of discussions. Strategies, low blows, invectives, suspicions, etc. are characteristic of a closed environment. The balance of power favors access to certain spaces with the administration. So, having or still being in the good graces of the prison authorities contributes to the prisoner's survival. Therefore, these actors have an interest, each on their own, in fueling at least latent conflicts in order to guarantee a prison position.

#### **4. Religious Knowledge, Carriers Of Conflicts Or Means Of Liberation**

According to the law of 1905 establishing the separation between the Church and the State, and the code of penal

procedure, the prisons must guarantee the free exercise of the cults to the prisoners. The State thus bears all the expenses necessary for this purpose. Empirical observations have shown that this is not always the case in the civil prison of Cotonou.

The reflection on the belief in a god makes it possible to reduce in some way the weight of the pain, of the injustice. Belief and practice help to access a new identity, a circle of sociability, a refuge. Those who do not accept their sentence, who feel frustration, humiliation, rejection or even forgotten find a way to resist by escaping the control of the prison administration. So, the uses that we make of religion are multiple. Thus, defendants awaiting trial mobilize religious resources either to find a conviction sooner or to get out of prison altogether. An informant notes that : “I am in my sixth year of prevention. I was listened to only once by the judge. This is not possible for a motorcycle theft case that I am accused of. I am not condemned. All attempts explored in order to inform the judge of my situation have been unsuccessful. Under these conditions, I can only fall back on the Lord of Hosts to free me from this yoke” (Daniel, 29 years old, 2nd prison experience, motorcycle theft, 6th year in prison).

## **5. The Social Impertinence of the Judiciary, Breeding Ground for Religious Conflicts**

The data collected reveals an ambition of prisoners to use parallel appeals to court decisions. Consequently, the social impertinence which consists in claiming a new way of structuring access to justice at the levels of education, accessibility to justice for all: the poor, the rich, men, women, small, large, nationals and foreigners. Therefore, establishing the necessary confidence in justice amounts to asking a question centered on local justice: social, geographical, physical, and religious. Thus, we will have a justice that does not have in itself the seeds of its dysfunction, of its own destruction. The

inaccessibility of legal services pushes detainees to use parallel remedies to court decisions. Knowledge in these parallel recourses as a response to social justice as conflict poses the problem of the social impertinence of justice. Sociology is clear on this, wherever the actors are not in situations of accessibility or social acceptability, the parallel responses are considered deviant (H. S. Becker, 1985, p. 27). It is a response to the system in which individuals do not find themselves. This content refers to an idea of conflict on the one hand between justice and prisoners and on the other hand between prisoners and the prison administration. This impertinence creates a market where several actors intervene : esparto, marabout, medium, priests of divinity, brothers, friends, etc. There are many crimes, there is the persistence of recidivism because this system feeds it. The individual leaves the prison, he reappears, he leaves so on. Finally, we have a justice that is tested by its social conveniences, its religious practices. The experience of access to the judicial offer involves religious experience. We go there for different reasons. And all come to the religious market, some to find peace of heart, others to bear the psychological shock, none to find a destination in terms of the results of the trial, etc. So, the men of justice understand a little bit if the litigants do not come to the lawyer, where do they go? What are they looking for that you can't give them? What do others have more than us? What do they sell more than us? In the medical environment, the individual is not sure that the doctor will cure him. He does not believe what the doctor is doing, he thinks his disease is not natural and it is sent. A thief must in principle be in prison. But he is convinced that his package is a bad spell that was sent to him. He will be obliged to seek appropriate answers in this same field. Thus, the judicial body not being specialized in this field will spend all its time punishing, imprisoning, condemning 10 years, 20 years in prison. The recluse leaves the prison then the evil spirit takes him back to perform the same act, the same causes producing the effects. So it is not in punishment that we

must manage to remove this crime from him but in sacrifices. The magistrate, by sentencing him to 10 years, 20 years in prison, thinks that the individual will no longer steal, but he is convinced that he is not the type to steal, he does not know why he stole.

In these logics, the individual fortifies himself in his religious practices, thinks that social justice will not be able to bring him anything, rather the divine justice to which he now has recourse. Thus, we are witnessing trials that succeed and others that do not. This shows that all this constitutes a breach of the manifestation of the truth and therefore a conflict between the detainees and the prison and judicial administration. In the various exchanges with the detainees, we noticed that several cases of conflicts due to the mysterious disappearances of the detainees had been identified. An inmate in charge of a building who had already tried this kind of experience recounted the story of the disappearance of an inmate in 2013: “Everyone answered the call that day. Everyone went about the routine activities in the building: prayers, reading Holy Scriptures or not, the matches, films and television news that occupied others, the sleep that demanded some in their single-seat bunk bed, etc. The ambient air was warm despite the presence of about forty fans operating at full time. It was still striking 11:50 p.m. when my attention was caught by Bernardin's actions, as usual his pranks of prayers. He disturbed, during his prayers, everyone by his gestures and voice to the point where one got used to it. The prayers sometimes took the form of two regimes: ascending and descending. The first diet took him so far that he went into a trance while the second brought him back into a state of discussion of discussion with an invisible. Suddenly, around 1 a.m., we couldn't hear anything. Has he finished his prayers? Was he sleeping? No one could answer these questions since he was always hiding behind a curtain. Thus, Bernardin's unusual silence caught the attention of his immediate neighbor. This one decided to see the after when he discovered the mysterious

disappearance of Bernardin. The information gathered momentum and landed on the table of the custody authorities. After a thorough search of the building and the entire prison, the report reveals the actual disappearance of Bernardin” (Rick, 41 years old, 1st prison experience, forgery and use of forgery in public writing, 4th year of detention).

Disappearances inside the prison result from the operation and organization of the judicial system and accessibility to justice for all. They thus pose a problem for justice and for the manifestation of the truth. The investigations in this direction reveal that this defendant, apprehended for theft, spent his 6th year of prevention without being condemned. These situations therefore generate conflicts between the supervised and supervisors and those who hold the power of condemnation.

## **6. Strategy For Redirecting The Debate**

Determination and self-determination are elements of behavioral stimulus that animate prison life. The choice of an armada of human and financial resources contributes to achieving a projected end. This is the case with the use of religious knowledge where an idea is constructed and reconstructed or oriented and reoriented in the desired direction. The defendant who has prepared himself, once face to face with the judge at the hearing, controls the mind from afar, the thought of the latter to approach the desired meaning. The cream passed on the eyebrows, small scarifications on the sensitive parts of the body, small amulets on the kidneys and drops of crushed leaves put on each eye a few hours earlier (before the hearing) make it possible to direct the verb of its vis -notice. A defendant noted in this regard that : “I am not coming to the hearing, not to give myself another chance but to snatch it. Whether it's the judge or my opponent, they have to go in the direction of what I want. They will accept what I said regardless of their will... I don't want to wear a vest anymore, I want to find my family... I spent a lot of

money to have this knowledge. And it is worth the cost...” (Jacques, 37 years old, 1st prison experience, rape, 7th detention without conviction).

Regarding the success rate of this operation, several people approached in the evening of that day confided that they were able to give a desired new direction to the debate at the hearing and the final decision was favorable. Thus, 17% of the decisions rendered on this day to 42 defendants were favourable. According to these informants, this success confirms the seriousness of the job, the belief in “things” and the superior quality of the products that were used.

Several facts with experiences, cases, and stories documented in the press and others inform that lawyers die, who bailiffs who fail to apply a decision, magistrates who fail to render a decision or who render a decision other than what they think. So these players in the legal world sometimes use a strategy of resilience for all eventualities. In an interview, an informant noted: “We are in Africa, everything is possible. All in all, you don't know who you might run into. Every detainee aims to regain his freedom. He will use all the means at his disposal to achieve this objective...” (Magistrate, 18-year career).

## **Conclusion**

The living conditions of the prisoner and the invocation of God are central issues essential to prison life. In other words, the psychological shock, the loss of personality of the individual, the shock on the experiences participate in the transformation of the life of the prisoners. The recluses discover or rediscover the way of God which is everything except the crimes, the excesses which brought them to prison, therefore a certain reconversion. But, if in reality the Beninese prisons do not represent a field of action for proselytism, occult practices and are only slightly crossed by religious tensions, in the minds, prejudices remain. On the other hand, the impertinence of the legal response

maintains a market parallel to court decisions and creates conflicts, whether manifest or latent. There is a parallel market maintained by the social impertinence of our judicial apparatus in its operation, in its device and in its enjoyment. This social impertinence of the judiciary produces a change in behavior among detainees in the Cotonou civil prison. These behaviors are reflected in the use of religious knowledge in parallel appeals to court decisions and thus create conflicts between the various actors involved in the civil prison of Cotonou. To remedy at this situation, each actor acting in the judicial sector should fully play and on time its role in order to solve conflicts in prisons. Thus the government should afford the judicial institutions useful means to make them moved smoothly.

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