Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.7 No.2 June, 2024; p.g. 215 – 229; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

TOWARDS X-RAYING WITCHCRAFT AND ITS SOCIAL TENSION IN NSUKKA ZONE ENUGU STATE

[1]ONAH TOBIAS CHIBUIKE, [3]NCHEKE NDUKA ALFRED & [1,2]EMEKA SIMON EJIM
[1]Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
[1,2]Humanities Unit, School of General Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
[3]Paraclete Secondary School, Obukpa, Nsukka
Chibuike.onah@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

The social tension brewed by witchcraft seems to be controversial; this is so because it is difficult to ascertain who is a witch. While many people subscribe to the belief in it, very many people try to disperse the phenomenon. It is against such milieu that the researchers sought to unveil the social tension created by the belief in witchcraft in Nsukka senatorial zone. The study adopted ethnographic narrative analysis. Also, semi-structured face to face interview were used wherein purposive sampling techniques guided the recruitment of participants. Attempt were made to define the concept and origin of witchcraft, the study indicates that the belief in witchcraft and its social tension is a reality in area as it is proved in the operation of witches in the area which rest mainly on their functions and confessions. Findings show that the belief in and fear of witchcraft among the people is real with much evidence from witches' confession in Nsukka Senatorial zone.

Keywords: x-ray, witchcraft, myth, reality, social tension, Nsukka.

INTRODUCTION

If witchcraft is a fallacy and part of human primeval past, then, he unquestionably ought to have gradually disposed them as he gets developed, knowledgeable and more advanced in science and other areas of human endeavour. The idea of witches and their craft has been a controversial one since there is an uncertainty to its belief over the years. While many people of Nsukka origin believe in the idea of witches, many people still say no to it, bearing in mind that happenings in the world around them, is characterized by causes and effects. People who hold this belief are mainly educated people who seek to interpret happenings around the world using somewhat systematic and empirical method of investigation. But to an average Nsukka man, this is not so, as severe predicament and protracted ill situation which people around Nsukka senatorial zone undergo, explained in the frequency of misfortunes such as: ailing health, business failures, road accident, poor agricultural yield, bareness, still birth, untimely death, examination failure only to mention but a few, shows that material rationalization and conventional technique are not sufficient in unraveling and addressing personal human problems in Nsukka. If an account is to be giving to this state of affair, then the idea and belief in witchcraft which informs the worldview and perception of the Nsukka people becomes apt. It is with regards to the above explication, that some people in the area under study, associates their misfortune to witchcraft. It is against such backdrop of mixed controversy that this research seeks to grapple with the problem to know if witchcraft is a myth or a reality in the area under study. The study adopts a phenomenological research method. The approach to this study is historical, analytical and objective. Therefore, this work seeks to unveil the concept and the origin of witches' practices in Nsukka and of course

enumerate types of witches and their activities. The study also used primary and secondary sources of data collection. The information classified under the primary sources came mainly from personal interviews conducted among elders and core traditionalists in various local government areas that make up Nsukka as a senatorial zone. The secondary materials were published works magazines, newspapers and journals. Personal interviews were conducted under a harmless atmosphere void of external influence or duress.

Concept and Origin of Witchcraft

Belief in and the concept of witchcraft seems to be widespread in Africa and in many societies throughout the world. While disbelief trails the concept of witchcraft among some people in the area under study, it is also perceptible that many people in the area subscribe to the existence of witches and their craft, which constitute major challenge in the area under study. In spite of the widespread belief in this phenomenon, many people of Nsukka origin are left with the conviction that witchcraft is mere superstition. This discernible contradiction begs the question; how the concept of witchcraft originated, types of witchcraft as well as activities considered as witchcraft. In agreement with the above assertion, Hutton (1991:205), suggests that:

> witchcraft do not represent a single identifiable religion, since they are found in a wide diversity of cultures, both present and historical; however, these beliefs do generally involve religious elements dealing with spirits or deities the afterlife, magic and ritual.

Hutton suggests that witchcraft is not connected with a single identifiable religion since its impression is ubiquitous in most culture. In addition, Mair (1974:283) identifies herself with the submission of Lewis (1996:88). In her opinion, she writes that: "there is also an idea of the kind of human being who is likely to be a witch a more so, unsocial, grumbling person, who eats alone but complains that his neighbours do not offer him food. Idowu (1973:175) has a different opinion; he opines that, "the spirits of living human beings can be sent out of the body on errands of doing havoc to the other persons in body, mind or estate". In addendum, Mbiti (1969:194) sees "witchcraft as an aspect of a broader spectrum of the phenomenon of mystical power" In the idea of mystical power, Mbiti was aware of the possibility of exploiting a certain power hidden in nature to cause motion in the physical universe. To Mbiti, magic, sorcery, medicine, necromancy, clairvoyance, foretelling the future, witchcraft is possible upon the exploitation of this hidden power of nature. While Mbiti holds that, witchcraft is a term used more popularly and broadly to describe all sorts of evil employment of mystical power, generally in secret fashion. It should be observed out rightly that Mbiti, unlike Awolalu and Dopamu (1979:247) who took the reality of witchcraft and evil attack for granted, understood witchcraft to be basically evil since in it, mystical power is employed for a negative purpose. Arazu (2003:87) agrees with this idea, "though in all he might be adjudged of playing a double standard". The first Arazu agrees with Mbiti on the idea that witchcraft is merely evil and menacing. According to him:

> African Traditional world view accepts witches as men responsible for causing sickness and other forms of misfortune... The witch has no conscience. Because almost everything connected with witchcraft takes place in astral plane, which is almost intangible, and beyond empirical verification, witches hide under the cover of darkness (Arazu, 2003:87).

Secondly Arazu posits that "even medicine men employ witchcraft in the cure of their patients and that witchcraft is not entirely an evil phenomenon". This seems not to make the idea of witchcraft a sweet music for Nsukka people who see witches and their craft from an absolutely a disparaging point of view. In agreement to the above explication, Rose (1962) adds that members of some religions have applied the term witchcraft in a pejorative sense, to refer to all magical or ritual practices other than those sanctioned by their own doctrines although this has become less common. According to Dominic Onah (interview 2020), "Witchcraft is also used to refer, scarcely, to the practice of magic in an unreservedly negative sense". In this regard, if the community accepts magical practices in general, then there is characteristically clear severance amid witches and the expressions used to portray permissible practitioners of the act. Ryan (2007: 46) holds that "witchcraft is used to refer broadly to the practice of magic and has a connotation similar to sorcery". It can be deduced at this point, that witchcraft in this sense may be seen with varying degrees of suspicion and hostility, or with ambivalence, being neither intrinsically good nor evil. In line with this, Eliade (1987:7) may not be wrong to write that, "the original concept of witchcraft is sorcery a web of belief and practices, whose purpose is to manipulate nature for the benefit of the witch". A great deal of confusion has risen in an attempt to define this term. It is in relation to this fact that Eliade (1987:9) maintains that "modem self-identified witches (especially practitioners of Wicca) are likely to use the term witchcraft to refer to both folk magic and rituals". In view of this, Parrinder (1967:92) slightly observes that, "witchcraft is believed in throughout Africa. Basically, it is the belief that certain people, chiefly women, have the power of changing themselves into other forms, when they prey on the bodies and souls of their enemies or even their relatives". Metuh (1987:159) supports that "a witch attacks by dispatching the spirit to capture and eventually devour parts of the spirit of the victim's flesh. This happens while the witch is asleep in his hut". From the array of the above clarification, it becomes palpable that the concept of witches and their craft is quite a contentious concept and as such appears difficult to define because it means different thing to different people. Some people in the area under study (Nsukka senatorial zone) hold tenaciously to the religious approach to human tribulations. In effect, when malevolent or benevolent happenings are beyond human explication, they will resign to fate and uphold their saying that; "God knows and that he is omnipotent and omniscience". From their own point of view, God created everything, therefore He is responsible for virtue and vices from the ab initio but he uses evil to bring good. To some people this statement counters their understanding about witches in Nsukka and they see it as the Christian Charismatic antics of indoctrination and so contends that in (Gen: 1:13) evil has never been and will never be the intention of God for creating the world. God created man in His own image and likeness (Gen 1:26) man in this context is seen as a supernatural being with free will to dialogue face to face with God. Man, disobeyed God and became physically spiritually mature (Eph. 4:14) and man became human. From this time, the glory of God left man and wickedness, suffering and witchcraft set in. Man was sent out of the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve became followers of Lucifer. From the array of this justification one can easily deduce that the origin of witchcraft is as old as mankind. In addition to the above position, Obayi (2007:104) cites a biblical injunction, which supports the claim of witchcraft having its origin from the Bible. For examples Saul, the king of Israel showed high abhorrence for witches and was seen driving all the witches and wizards away from the nation of Israel but later went back to consult one of them in time of adversity (1 Sam 28:3-15). In the prophecy of Balam, he declared, that "No magic charm or witchcraft spell could be used against the nation of Israel". (Num. 23:23) St Paul also said that "among those destined for hell fire are the

witches and wizards" (Gal 5:9) Also the apocryphal book of Tobit contains an account in which at the instruction of an angel, an evil spirit is expelled from a bridal chamber by the aroma of a smoldering fish heart and liver. (Tobit 6:14-18). The Bible also contains injunction against witchcraft, such as you shall not suffer a witch to live (Exodus 22:18). This command was used to justify the persecution of witches in the medieval Europe. Commenting on the origin of witchcraft, Ozioko Michael (interview 2020) states that, witchcraft begins out of pride. He further gathers that some people in Nsukka find it prestigious when others call them "strong men" and this explains why some men go to procure magic charms in order to be witches and wizards. This fact explains the occurrence of certain dreadful illness like epilepsy, long menstrual period, miscarriages, non-specific ovarian failure, and one growing insipid without any particular medical complaint, failure in life, poor harvest, nightmares and accidental death. If an account is to be sought in respect to this, the people of the area under study may interpret her plight in terms of witchcraft, if an attempt to offer solution to their problems fails. To substantiate the claim that witchcraft originates out of pride, Parrinder (1967: 27) observes that:

> "There is a profound conviction of the weakness of witches, sorcerers and many others who are thought to damage the life and health of beings prevent childbirth or spoil the crops". According to him, a true man, who is unified and it's in harmony with God and spirits, lives according to principles and his philosophy recognized human worth, but a man, who is puffed up with pride and ambition, seeking power simply to crush others, is a witch and is bound to come to an evil end by the law of the universe. Parrinder's view corroborates rather contradict the people's worldview and perception of witches having their origin out of man's envy and pride instead of throwing overboard the explanatory powers of witches or rather attributing human and material misfortunes to causes and effect, many people uphold the traditional view of associating misfortune to witchcraft.

Types of witches in the Study area

In the area under study there appear to be categories of witches as the case may be and in alignment with this fact, it is pertinent to have an overview of the categories of witches as they exist in the area under study below:

Sorcery

In the area under study, it is believed that some men and women implore somewhat spiritual powers to harm others, thereby making a God blessed destiny to become an unhappy one. According to Parrinder (1967:92):

> Magic can be good or bad. Illicit magic is known as sorcery. It is offensive and anti-social in nature; it is much feared because it can be used to kill, to harm or to destroy life and properties, and to disrupt the wellbeing of individuals and society. A person who uses bad magic is a sorcerer. He is feared and hated by all.

From the above illumination, sorcery could be seen as an evil machination of ill minded men who inflict pain on people just out of absolute sadism. To this end, Meek (1974:297) opines that:

> Sorcerers are evil-minded people who capture, torture and injure or kill souls in a variety of ways, notably by acting on the hair, nail-parings or excreta of a person, the substance of the person being regarded as important tool to enable the activities of witch on individual.

To support this claim, Ani Augustine (interview 2020) posits that, "sorcerers normally succeed in their dealing by possessing some body parts like hairs, fingernail and the like". According to Ozioko this acts as a medium through which the sorcerer deals negatively with his victims. Also, Abugu Odo (interview 2018) adds that, "Sorcery is believed to work through food and the utensils used in eating and drinking". This is one reason why a greater care is taken so that no unauthorized person shall handle the food platters of any other person. For Eze Philip (interview 2020) he asserts that this form of witchcraft is acquired through consulting notably native doctors to obtain such powers to harm others in a variety of ways such as poisoning an individual, causing accident, killing of innocent victim because of envy, disrupting people's destiny and the like.

Hereditary Witches

This implies the transfer of witch's power from one individual to another through inheritance. In the area under study witches and their offspring are most detested in view of this fact, the sons and daughters of a said witch can also possess the act of witchcraft. In this case, the practice is transferred from a member of a family to his siblings through inheritance. Although Onyeishi (Elder) Samuel Odo (interview 2021) opines that "the people under study strongly believes that this type of witchcraft involves people that can trace the craft back to their family tree in an uninterrupted kin link, passed down through their generation by their ancestors to their off sprigs. In like manner Okpe Meletus (interview 2020) in a contrasting opinion "maintains that "the act of witchcraft is not inheritable to Obollo-Afor people, which forms an integral part of the area".

Irrespective of these assertions, there are still widespread beliefs that exist among the people, that witchcraft is propagated from generation to generation in the families of those who may be committed to it. As Odo Paul interview (2020) rightly notes, "it is transferred through charm from one generation to the other" To buttress this stand, Parrinder (1963:135) holds that, 'Witchcraft is not hereditary but must be acquired from someone who already has the power". The views of Ogbonna Nnaji interview (2020) contradict the views of Parrinder when he affirms that Sylvaster Odo from Eha- Alumona confessed publically to having three children who are witches by virtue of being born into his family. For Adegbola (1983:316), he affirms that people can become witches through inheritance; children can become witches by being born into a family, without their knowing it. To buttress this claim, at Fr. Paul Martins Obayi adoration ground Odo Ifeanyi confessed of having inherited the act of wizardry from his father who was a wizard. Also, in association to this, Chinenye Ugwuanyi attests to being a witch at the adoration ground and also relates that she inherited it from her late mother who was a witch. It is to this ends that people in the area under study tend to trend with caution about the families they associate witchcraft with.

Born Witches

These are mainly people who become witches by virtue of being born into a particular family, Although Parrinder (1967:135) proves wrong, the idea that some witches are born, studies

within the area under study reveals that there are born witches. For Onah Joseph (interview 2021) he affirms that "some witches are born". He adds that an individual can be possessed by a witch spirit even at a pre-natal stage and that this is obtained by an expectant mother having contacts with a said witch either in the market, church, at home or elsewhere. He also said that a witch has a potency to interfere with the fetus at the pre-natal stage. Rev. Obayi in his sermon on 30/11/2019 maintain that some people are born with the craft and need nobody else to initiate them into the kingdom of witches and wizards, from birth they are already endowed with this innate biological characteristic as witches and wizards.

Transmittable Witchcraft

It is a widespread belief in Nsukka, that some people acquire the act of witchcraft through eating food given to them by a "witch". Arazu (2003) agrees that a person becomes a witch by eating a witchcraft substance, and once it is eaten, the witch compulsively engages in a kind of astral travel with the mission to destroy. A true-life confession of a witch who was initiated by receiving a gift from an old woman was Ngozi Agbedo who on Feb 22, 2019, confessed in a crusade held by Fr Paul Obayi at Nsukka. The writer was a life witness to the confession of Ngozi, who said "she was initiated by collecting N100.00 worth of biscuit from an old woman and since then, she has been in the active service of the devil. She is said to have removed the womb of her sister whom she had lived with since she was in primary school. As at the time of this interview, the culprit is still in the environment of Rev. Father Obayi. Above all, one can also be initiated through using the property of a witch like dress, perfume, earring, necklace and other related properties. According to Ugwu Dennis (interview 2019) Ifeoma Nnamani from Amaube in Igboeze North became a witch by constantly wearing the clothes of one Ezinne Ugwueze her cousin who was her school mate. She confessed to the crime and attested to nude flight at night to an Iroko tree and feasting on male genitals. This act is also in conformity with the views of Ugwuanyi Vitus (interview 2020) who holds that Amaka Ezema in her trial by ordeal confessed to feasting on women fallopian tube and male private organs in order to turn a happy marriage to an unhappy one. She further confessed to travelling as far as Benin to attend a night meeting. In the same manner, Matthew Eze (interview 2020) narrates how Eze Nwakaego from Uzouwani confessed to being a witch in a crusade geared towards cleansing the village. The said witch confessed that she is the second in command in her vicinity and narrated how she got trapped in the kingdom by using the food utensils of her close friend she gathered that they travelled as far as India for their nocturnal meeting which were attended by most powerful representative of some notable countries in a secret manner. The above position was further corroborated by Olupona (2000:177) who holds that, "the more powerful the witch, the less likely it is that ordinary people will find empirical evidence of his or her activities". To buttress this point Metuh (1987:166) agrees that "witchcraft beliefs are still common in Africa today. While working in a parish in Eastern Nigeria a good number proportion of pastoral cases…was about witchcraft attacks".

Solitary witchcraft

This suggests witches and wizards who may voluntarily wish to work in solitude instead of working together in factions. Ronald (2007) agrees that this type of witches, are individuals who prefer to work in private rather than within the confines of a group or coven. In any case, solitary working can be as fulfilling as working in a group setting. They undertake a ritual of self-initiation to dedicate themselves to the demon, which they adhere to. The existence of

solitary witches is clear from the opinion of the people in the area under study. In line with this, Odo Ignatius (interview 2019) adds that some men prefer to remain in solitude and plan the evil to harm people in the visible world. Olupona (2000:177) adds that witches are powerful and are able to keep their activities secret in solitude from outsiders. Odo Abugu (interview 2020) notes that Eya Nwaonyeke from Inyi in Enugu Ezike killed about 66 people through solitary witchcraft. He confessed to this crime at the Catholic prayer ministry of the Holy Spirit Elele Rivers State Nigeria (participant observer). He said he achieved this means by a magic mirror where he called his victims to appear before inflicting injury to them and death will be the resultant effect. Benardine Eze (interview 2020) narrates how Maria Mamaejeh was exposed during offertory at St. Anthony's Catholic Church Obollo Etiti. She wanted to bring out money for offering and a magical substance fell from her purse. This caught the attention of the church members who made her to confess. In her confession she agrees that she made her daughter barren Dorathy Mama to become barren and also called people to death in a pot (known as Ite-Eya-pot of fever in English). She later confessed to having killed 13 people. The woman was everyone's friend and she had so many fans and so good-humoured a person but worked against nature in secret. Also, Agbo Denial interview (interview2020) narrates how Odo Henry Onyebuchi from Enugu Ezike killed one Nnaji Candidus from Orba through calling him in a pot full of water and when he appeared he used knife to cut his throat spiritually. This act was perpetrated because Odo Henry Onyebuchi was owing Nnaji Candidus.

Operation of Witches in Nsukka

The existence and operation of witches in the area under study cannot be entirely unproven as there are instances of witches' voluntary confessional statements tilting towards the reality of their reprehensible behaviour. It is with regards to this that the researcher seeks to uncover some despicable behaviours of witches in the area as follows.

Witches Nocturnal Meetings

In the area under study, it is a proven reality that witches operate at night. This to some educated elite could be as a result psychological impression that night in itself is fearful but this is not true. The views of Nadel (1952) becomes key he posits that their activities take place in a fantasy realm, which is intangible and beyond empirical verification with regards to this, the word of Mama Innocent interview (2020) becomes imperative. He affirms that the fear of witches' familiar animals like birds is common in the area and this informs the reason why the inhabitants of some villages welcomes with fear the shrill sounds of birds at night According to Parrinder (1967:141):

> The Igbo of Eastern Nigeria believe that witches can infect innocent people by putting a spiritual substance into their food. Having partaken of it, the person is susceptible to the influence of the witch who then administers a drug to 'make his mouth blunt'. This medicine induces a craving for human flesh and so the neophyte seeks admission to the guild of witches and is told to meet them at night.

Witches surreptitious meeting at night are not the same with that of normal human beings but a meeting geared towards accomplishing deadly assignments of the witches. Andrew (2003:51), affirms the meeting, of witches at night and maintains that "witchcraft was thought of as a social affair and witches, however separately they lived, were believed to form

assemblies, covens and Sabbaths and they were conscious of these meetings and recognized those whom they meet at night meetings. Metuh (1987:159) holds that some nocturnal birds and animals like owls, rats, cats or even bats are associated with witches as their agents. The witch may incarnate into one of these to influence her mission". To authenticate this fact the confessional statement of Abonyi Ifeoma becomes apposite. According to Abonyi Ifeoma through trial by ordeal confessed that she was responsible for her brother's fertility problems because she spiritually took her brother's wife fallopian tube to their nocturnal meeting at Edo (Benin City) where it was feasted upon.

The researcher was a participant observer in crusade held at Umuiyida in Enugu Ezike on 15-06-2010 during which a fourteen-year-old girl by name Nkechi Ugwunnaji confessed to night meeting with elderly women at Warri, Delta State. She adds that her reason for sleeping comfortably on the assembly ground while other students matched into the classroom was because she hardly slept at night because of their nighttime meeting. According to her class teacher, "she sleeps on the assembly ground standing while others were matched into their various classes". Ugwumama Stephen interview (2020), agrees to witches' night meeting when he posits that "in the past, witches confess that they belong to coven which meet at night to hold discussions and eat human flesh, give children convulsions in their sleep, or give men wet dreams". If actually witches go about this despicable behaviour in the hiding and are sometimes responsible for children's convulsion, then the idea of associating the cause of convulsion to cerebral malaria and other empirically tested factors should be accepted with doubts. It is in consonance with this claim that, Field (1960:132) "states that confessions in which witches said they belonged to a company of seven, that they were chief of the company and could name the chief and fellow witches. Some of the companies are mixed up with men and women and that they meet at night". According to Field, witches' company during the meeting is like a law court and has a messenger, and an executioner, Ezea Clement interview (2020) states a story of how a fever ointment was used to kill an only son by a said witch by name Ogbu Modester at mid-night as instructed to, because his father was becoming more progressive than a member of their coven. To buttress the fact that witches really meet at night, Meek (1974:79) observes that:

> Ibo witches are said to be organized into guilds, so that they can work together to procure victims. Hence, they are known to each other and meet at night, at an hour indicated by the cry of birds, when they all gel up from their beds and go to the places of assembly.

From the above analogy this could be the reason why the cries of birds, like owl, vulture, and kites are not taken for granted in the senatorial zone. Ugwu Oyima Evelyn (interview 2019) affirms that "witches fly to the confines of Iroko and mahogany trees at night and there, held meetings bound for destruction of lives and properties. She further states that witches detest inyi tree in the area because it is a tree believed to have some supernatural powers to track down witches" In addition to this fact, Parrinder (1967:37) opines that:

> In the continent of Europe, from the time of the council of Ancyra in the ninth century, the idea had been current that witches ride and meet at night with Diana on certain beasts with an innumerable company of women...In England the Lancaster witches, for example, were typical in that they were said to eat mutton… on Good Friday, their meetings were believed to be held always at night, in wild places.

It is hard to think that the whole far-reaching structure of conviction to witches' meetings in Nsukka was purely illusive until one hears witches confessing freely and with detail to the most impossibly thing one thinks about. The writer's evidence to back up this claim was his frequent attendance to crusades conducted by Obayi, at Umuiyida, during which, witches who confess of meeting at night were obliged to divulge the names of their confederates after fierce spiritual battle with the officiating priest in the person of Father Paul Obayi. Ngozi Ngwu (interview 2020) opines that Odo Clementina disclosed her flight at night and also said that they go out to a specific Iroko tree near a market in Benin and the said culprit have never traveled to Benin. To show that nocturnal meetings at night are a universal activity of witches, Parrinder (1967:28) has this to say:

> Witches' meeting was believed to be held always at night, at any location, but there were said to be favorite resorts, in Germany the Broken Mountains, in Italy a certain Oak tree near Benevento, and more vaguely a wild region beyond the river Jordan.

With the above assertion one, can agree with Field (1960:39), that "there are still traces of some witches' assembly in Europe, which are essentially nocturnal and anti-social".

Witches stripped flight at night

The stripped flight at night was one of the oldest stands of witchcraft belief and strongly enough one of the most enduring. In an interaction with Eze David, interview (2020) he attests to this fact when he said that "witches have in them the ability to fly to other countries of the world for their gathering. Odonu James from Ezimo interview (2020) in Udenudem Local Government Area was of the view that 'witches turn into familiar animals of their choices to enable their voyage at night". According to him, they go there, on familiars like owl, vulture, bats kites and the like. To support the above saying, Parrinder (1967:42) have this to say: "In many cases in seventeenth century England, we find the plea, or the verdict solemnly recorded, not guilty, no flying". It can be deduced from Parrinder's observation that witches nude flight by night was taken as one of the criteria for convicting a witch, which agrees with the fact that flying was an indispensable activity of witches. Parrinder (1967:44) notes that:

> In popular European belief the witch flew to her Sabbath riding on a broomstick and some 'witches are certainly said to have claimed to fly up the smokestack or out of the window. Possibly there was a superstition against passing through the doorway, or they were thought to go invisibly. But since many houses of poor people had no chimneys and small windows, this belief may be a later variant.

From the above statement, it is apparent that flight is one of the indispensable characteristics of witches. For Sprenger (1951:68) "witches' flying was 'proved' by their own confession". Such proof would not pass unquestioned today; this is because confessional statements have been made by witches on their dying beds in the area under study. The researcher was aware of his neighbour who on her dying bed confessed to have killed he brother in-law, her own child and two other uncle's children through witchcraft. She also said that. She flies at night to inflict sicknesses on her victims.

Sprenger agrees, among such confessions that there was a woman in the town of Briesachs whom he asked whether they could be transported only in imagination, or actually in the

body; she answered that it was possible by both ways. Affirming this, Pamnder (1967:44) notes that "Some witches claimed to have a magical ointment with which they anointed their bodies all over, and so were able to fly through the air... Hence, they stripped naked before setting out on their flight". The above argument was further accentuated by Boraja (2003:44) who states that "the blood of a child, or the powdered bones of a man who had been hanged, with certain herbs. Magically prepared can make one take off and be air borne". To corroborate this opinion Ugwuanyi Michael (interview 2021) attests to sensation of flying when he supports that Oyibo Mama on her dying bed confessed to being a witch and also maintained that she flew up to River State for their convention during which one of the witches provided a newborn to be feasted upon.

Feasting on human flesh

Feasting on human flesh spiritually appears to be one key feature of a witch. This is because upon confessing the witch divulges the issue of feasting on human flesh mainly women fallopian tube or male genitals to make fruitful marriage a barren one. According to the Hornby (1979:322), "cannibalism is the act of eating human flesh". Cannibalism was very common in the primordial Africa but came to extinction because of the advert of Christianity and western education that is associated with it. Today this practice is associated with witchcraft. Parrinder (1967:50) opines that:

> witches in their Sabbaths were supposed to kill and eat new-born and un-baptized children. This was the worst thing with which the medieval populace charged them". He further posited that the Jews also had been accused of committing this horrible crime in their synagogues and Sabbaths, and of course they were supposed to have an interest in stealing children before they are protected with the water of baptism. This activity in Jewish religion is the same with that of the witches in the area under study.

Agbo Geraldine's confession on the crusade ground can attest to this fact. She states that she was charged with the responsibilities to go out at night to trap unborn babies and neonates for the sole purpose of feasting on them during their cannibalistic meetings at night.

With regard to this fact, Parrinder (1967:50) corroborates that, "it is commonly believed that a new witch brings one of her own relatives to the assembly for the company to feast on the body, and when they reach the heart or liver, the Victim dies". In accordance with this fact, Bartstow (1994) maintains that:

> a witch confessed that she killed a girl and a boy and saved herself by running away in Europe... They said that they had eaten part of the children but never touched their right side. Others particularly midwives and wise women who are witches are in the habit of offering to Satan the little children which they deliver, and then of killing them, before they have been baptized, by thrusting a large pin into their brains.

Spell Casting

In the area under study spell casting was seen as a heinous offence and this is not welcomed with smiles in the area under study. According to George and Sinclair (1961) spell casting is the most obvious characteristics of a witch. The source said that a spell could consist of a set of words, a formula or verse, or a ritual action, or any combination of these.

On spell casting Davies (1999:51) added that:

> Spells traditionally were employed by many methods, such as by the inscription of runes or sigils on an object to give it magical powers, by the immolation or binding of a wax or clay image (poppet) of a person to affect him or her magically, by the recitation of incantations, by performing of physical rituals, by the employment of magical herbs as amulet or potions, by gazing at mirror, swords or other specula for purpose of divination.

To buttress the fact that spell casting was part of activities of witches in the area under study, Obayi (2007:151) maintained that 'There are men who delight in harming others spiritually through casting spells in their victim's abdomen. This makes their victim to fall sick and look pale A good example of a witch who casts spells is Crescent Ngwu whom people in Enugu Ezike mistook for a positive medicine man but on the contrary he confessed at Obayi's crusade that there is a man he chained with keys, and to another man, he put a pin inside in his body and that he is well vested in the act of invoking people in mirror and maiming them for their enemies. He also said that he can put water instead of fetus in the fallopian tube of an expectant mother.

Negative Influence of Witches and Wizards on Humanity

From the array of the definition of witchcraft, one can infer that it is thoroughly evil, and a witch is a person who practices witchcraft. According to Olupona (2000:176) he said that:
"Different societies vary in the details of belief about what witches typically do to humanity, us they vary in their language about witchcraft... most African languages have words that can appropriately be described as or translated us a ' witch' or witchcraft". Elder Okonkwo Sunday (interview 2021) strongly agrees with Olupona's view in this regard. He opines in the researchers interview with him that "the Igbo from Nsukka area referred to witchcraft and wizardry as 'ili-a musu' or iliwa-anya. He further said that amusu (witches) are highly detested by men and women in the society because they go about causing damage to life and properties at night. He also said that sometimes in the past, witchcraft involve transformation into animals like black snakes or pythons to do harm to people just because of the fun of it. To him, this is the reason why the cries of birds like owls' bats, vultures, kites are not taken for granted in the life of the people in Nsukka. To them, it is a signal for the witch's assembly. Makata Pius (interview 2019) agrees with the views of Eze Joel's (interview 2021) assertion when he adds that: "witches transform into various shapes at night and fly up to a considerable distance to cause havoc". He further added that the sole purpose of their meetings at night was to engage in spiritual cannibalism. According to Olupona (2000:176), "witches are often believed to work in groups of covens, which meet at night to conspire in their kicked plans and carry out their strange rituals". Olupona further opines that the activities of witches flout the values of society in which they lived. He said that witches are believed to delight in evil for its own sake. Clear evidence to buttress the position of Olupona, in the area under study (Nsukka senatorial zone), was an event, reported by stalite Newspaper on Monday August 13, 2007, page 15. The source gathered the story of how Miss Nkeiruka Ugwu, an SS 2 student of Girls5 Secondary School Owerre Eze Orba in Orba Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu-state, had been sick and went to the hospital. The doctor observed that she had a serious case of typhoid fever, which has seriously affected her abdominal wall and perforated it. Following this diagnosis, the doctor recommended a major operation, which was carried on successfully. After some days as the stalite gathered, that the lady in question began to have spiritual attacks at night where she reportedly shouted Ebere, Ebere leave me

alone, what did I do to you? This situation later degenerated, and Nkiru could not have the power to resist the attacks, which according to the report, culminated to her death. However, things took a different dimension when the suspected Ebere allegedly confessed that she was responsible for the early demise of Nkeiru. She was also alleged to have been the brain behind the death of Jacinta Ugwuoke who underwent a surgical operation at Bishop Shanahan hospital sometimes in June 2005. Angered by the rampaging crowd on her confession, they were said to have beaten and tied her (the witch) on a tree for some hours and investigations showed that she was later released to Fr Paul Obayi. Ebere when interrogated by Paul said that she killed her fellow girl just for the fun of it and that she had no reason whatsoever for this dastardly act. Mba, Godwin (interview2019) told a researcher that "the witch deals not only with human beings but also with their properties". He said that in his area, Uzo Uwani, an enemy could turn into an animal familiar to deal with the crops or animals of his rivals. Mba also maintains that the locking of doors and fences and windows would not protect their victims from attacks. To him if the victim is awake, they will cast spell of sleep on their victim before attacking him or her. Festus Abugu (interview 2019) he observes the persistence of witchcraft among the people of his community and maintained that they are responsible for all forms of misfortunes in the community like: making a woman barren, making a man impotent or at other times putting stone instead of a baby in the womb of women. He also said that they (witches) have the potency to make a man pregnant without anything being diagnosed by the medical practitioners. Abugu maintains that witches are all malevolent. According to him, the name of a witch sounds so terrifying, and a witch can never be benevolent, and they cause a lot of trouble in the community in which they leave. This is in line with the view of Bourdillon (1987:176), when he affirms that, "witches engage in activities that are contrary to the values of the society and witches do what others are afraid to do". Witches kill and are assumed to be able to protect themselves from revenge. Michael Okpe (interview 2020) narrates the dangerous activities of a young witch on his parent's financial failure. According to Okpe, the eleven-year-old girl confessed in a crusade, held by himself (Michael Okpe) that whenever her parents make a move to boost their financial standard, she will cast spell of sickness to her younger ones and in a bid to take care of her younger siblings, her father will spend all the money he has gotten. According to the source, the minor confessed with a total remorse not to go back to her previous state, and she passed through some process of deliverance and was accepted as a full member of Living Faith Christian Church.

The above statement by Michael Okpe is in accordance with the view of Olupona (2000:177) when he states that, "if a convicted witch is contrite and shows a desire to mend his or her ways. he or she should ritually be cleansed and accepted back into the community overtime". In Friday 4th of April 2008, the writer was present in a crusade held by Paul Obayi during which Amarachi Odo from Umuida confessed to being a witch. She also said that she has killed seven people and held the womb of her sister whom she lives with. Below Amarachi's stomach was a stone. Which was the substance for her airborne activities at night? When Obayi interrogated her, she confessed that her sister's womb is in the spirit realm and promised to restore her womb on the 11th of April 2008. After her deliverance she was accepted back to Christianity with the promise that history will not repeat itself. Again, Scholastica Ezema in an (interview 2020) tells a story of how her own sister's daughter by name Ngozi Idoko, who confessed to be a witch. According to the source, the witch confessed of many nefarious activities. She said she was responsible for the death of children in her area.

She said if she wants a child to die, she will rub an ointment on her palm and then use it to rub her victim spiritually. Again, she said that if she wants to abort a baby from an expectant mother she will do so by burning an NGK plug and then use it to touch the expectant mother spiritually and the baby is automatically ejected prematurely from the womb. According to the source, Ngozi confessed of not doing this willingly but will be aware of her activities in the morning when she is back from their nocturnal gathering were they set their ordeal to do harm to people. Belief in witches and wizardry in the geographical locality under study cannot be doubted. To them, the existence of witches and their activities is real but is in accordance with the experience of people who hold them and do not encompass coherent elucidation of pragmatic evidence. According to Eze (2007:52), "in Neke of Isi-Uzo local government of Enugu state in June 1984, when there was drought, five rain makers were accused of being responsible". They were tried by ordeal in a shrine of a deity in a nearby town-Mbu. These men were, Ugwu Odo Eze, Odo Udogu, Gabriel Ogbodo, Nnamani Isingene and Odo Aneke. After this trial these men were brought back to the town half dead and four of them did not survive it. It was later discovered that the only survivor ate food that morning which served as an antidote. Nevertheless, he was declared innocent while the other four were seen as the cause of the drought. The implication is that among the killers, they have no whether expert who could explain the reason for the draught but went out to destroy souls they cannot create in the name of divination. Finally, the research holds that in the area under study, witchcraft is real to the people because of much attestation, tilting towards the reality of witchcraft as made manifest from their willful confession to be witches in the area.

Conclusion

Though we may be skeptical about the evidence of confessions, witchcraft remains a reality for the people in the area and also to Africans in general. From the research so far, it is clear that witches in the area under study in particular and Africa in General have similar characteristic features, and this has made the belief to be widespread over many nations of the world, despite the fact that the concept differs among nation. In the area under study evidence of types of witches are bound ranging from sorcery, born witches, hereditary witches, transmittable witches and solitary witches their features appear to cut across Igbo culture to a wide range of culture in Nigerian and other parts of Africa is not to be left out. The delight in, nocturnal meeting, stripped flight at night, feasting on human flesh, spell casting and the like. Their activities are generally adjudged to be reprehensible in the area under study and this informs the reason why the indigenes of the area under study trends with caution in issues concerning witches because their activity is obvious.

References

Adegbola. A.A (1983). Traditional Religion in West Africa. Uzima Press: Nairobi Kenya Anthropology). Cambridge: University Press.

Arazu. A. (2003). *A Cultural Model for Christian Prayer, in Shorter; A (ed) An African Christian Spirituality*. Maryknoll: Orbis.

Awolalu, O. J and Dopamu. P. A. (1979:247) West African Traditional Religion. Onibonje Press: Ibadan Nigeria.

Bartstow, A.L. (1994). *Witch craze. A New History of the A Hunts.* San Francisco: Pandora Press.

Boraja, C.J. (2003). *The World of Witches*. Chicago: University Press.

Davies .O. (1999). *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture Manchester*. University Press.

Eliade, M. (1987). *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Eze, A.A. (2007). *The Resilience of African Religion: Study of Human Sacrifice, Ritual Killing in Igbo 'Land*. M.A. Religion Project University of Nigeria Nsukka.

Field, M.J. (1960). *An Ethno-Psychiatric Study of Rural Ghana*. London. Faber and Faber Press.

George. A. & Sinclair. F., (1961). *Types of Witches in Europe,* Retrieved on 13 of July 2008 from.

Hornby, A.S. (1979). *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English*: Oxford University Press.

Hutton, R. (1991). *Pagan Religion of the ancient British Isles.* Oxford Blackwell.

Idowu E.B. (1973). *African Traditional Religion:* A Definition, London: S.C.M. Press.

Lewis, I. M. (1985). Social Anthropology in Perspective. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

Mair, L. (1974). *African Societies*. Cambridge University Press.

Mbiti, J.S. (1969). *Introduction to African Religion*. New York: Praeger London.

Meek, C.K. (1974). *Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe* Oxford*:* London Press.

Metuh. E.I (1987) Comparative Study of African Traditional Religions Onitsha: Imico Publishers.

Nadel, S.F.(1952). Witchcraft in four African Communities: An Essay in Comparism. American Anthropologist 54.18-29

Obayi M (2007). *An Exposition for the Eradication of Occultism*. Published by Digital Frontiers Ltd Wuse Abuja.

Ogara .H. (2007August 13th). Witchcraft in Nsukka, the Starlite, Vol.5 p 13.

OIupona, K.J. (2000). *African Spirituality Forms Meaning and Expression.* Cross Road Publishers New York.

Parrinder, G. (1963). *Witchcraft: Europe and Africa*, London: Penguin Books.

Parrinder, G. (1967). *Witchcraft: Europe and Africa*, London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Ronald H. (2007). *Types of witches in Africa the free Encyclopedia,* updated 9 August 2007, retrieved from http:/enwikiDedia.ors/wiki/shamanism.org.

Rose. E. (1962). *Pagan Religion of The Ancient British Isles the Free Encyclopedia* retrieved "on 13th June 2021, from http/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/witchcraft.

Ryan. (2001). *The Bathouse of Midnight: A Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia.* Pennsylvama State: University Press.

Spreger .A. (1958). *Witchery Way*, Retrieved on December 2nd, 2008, from http/enwikipedia.org/wiki/witcheryway.

Oral interview

Dominic Onah (interview 2020)
Ozioko Michael (interview 2020)
Ozioko Michael (interview 2020)
Ani Augustine (interview 2020)
Abugu Odo (interview 2018)
Eze Philip (interview 2020)
Samuel Odo (interview 2021)
Okpe Meletus (interview 2020)
Odo Paul (interview 2020)
Ogbonna Nnaji (interview 2020)
Onah Joseph (interview 2021)
Ugwu Dennis (interview 2019)
Ugwuanyi Vitus (interview 2020)

Matthew Eze (interview 2020)
Odo Ignatius (interview 2019)
Odo Abugu (interview 2020)
Benardine Eze (interview 2020)
Agbo Denial interview (interview2020)
Mama Innocent (interview 2020)
Ndu Ifeanyi (interview 2020)
Ugwumama (Stephen interview 2020)
Ezea Clement (interview 2020)
Ugwu Oyima Evelyn (interview 2019)
Ngozi Ngwu (interview 2020)
Eze David, (interview 2020)
Odonu James (interview 2020)
Ugwuanyi Michael (interview 2021)
Okonkwo Sunday (interview 2021)
Makata Pius (interview 2019)
Joel Eze interview (2021)
Mba, Godwin (interview2019)
Abugu (interview 2019)
Michael Okpe (interview 2020)
Ezema in an (interview 2020)