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Witchcraft Practices as an Extra-Mundane Communications: A Study of Self-confessed Witches and Wizards, Relatives and Victims in Edo & Delta States, Nigeria

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Abstract

The researcher investigated witchcraft practices as an extra-mundane communications: A study of self-confessed witches and wizard, their relatives and victims of witchcraft attacks in Edo and Delta states, Nigeria. The main objective of the study is to ascertain the extent witches and wizards used extra-mundane communications in witchcraft practices. Premised on the Uses and Gratification theory, the researcher adopted the survey method of research and surveyed selected witches and wizards in the two states. Findings revealed that witches and wizards make uses of extra-mundane communication during witchcraft practices. The study showed that the predominant extra-mundane communications used in witchcraft practices are sacrifices, star and water, gazing, voodoo, incantations, invocations, animal ritual, sorcery, necromancy and conjuring. The study also revealed that extra-mundane communications are employed by witches and wizards to be able to contact other spiritual powers for various forms of assistance. It is therefore concluded that extra-mundane communications are essential part of witchcraft practices, thus, witches and wizards cannot summon other spiritual forces and powers for assistance them without the use of extra-mundane communications.

Keywords: Witchcraft, Extra-mundane communication, Witches and Wizards practices, Nigeria

Introduction

Communication is one of the essential gifts of nature. It has been recorded that the world and all that exist therein are products of communication abilities and prowess of the supreme intelligence (God) (Gen. 1: 1-26, John 1: 1-6). By extension, man who is the express image of the creator has also inherited communication abilities. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons why Palmer (1968) posits that man by nature is homo loquacious and homo grammatus. Tracing the origin of communication, MacBride et al (1981) cited by Ebeze (2002 Pp. 30) asserts that:

Starting with the simplest vocal and gestural signal rooted in their physical

structure, human beings developed a whole range of non-verbal means for conveying message: music and dance, drum messages, signals, fires, drawings, and other forms of graphic symbols, including, the pictogram....

Africans in general and Nigerians in particular have developed a complex modes of communication before the advent of the mass media. These complex modes, methods and structure of communication among and between Africans in general and Nigerians in particular, are embedded in African traditional communication systems. Traditional communication systems in

Africa and Nigeria in particular is a complexities of festivals, rituals, symbolism, myth, objectifies, riddles, dances, folklore and witchcraft. It is not only the reflection of the communities but the cultures of the various communities. Ugboajah (1985p.165-175), Dede (1997) in Ukonu & Wogu (2006, p.8), Onuh (2007, p.30), Ebeze (2002, p.26) and Ugwu (2013, p.391) posits that:

Traditional communication is the products of the interplay between a traditional community's customs and conflicts, harmony and strife, cultural convergences and divergences, culture specific tangibles, interpersonal relations, symbols and codes and moral traditions which include mythology, oral literature (poetry, story-telling, proverbs), masquerades, witchcraft, rites, rituals, music dance, drama, costumes and similar abstractions and artifacts which encompass a people's factual, symbolic and cosmological existence from birth to death and even beyond death.

Scholars in the area of African traditional communication systems such as Ukonu and Wogu (2006), Ansu-Kyeremen (1998) in Akpabio (2003, p.2) as cited by Ugwu (2013, p.391) are of the view that traditional communication systems in Africans are reflections of the various African communities. Kombol (2012, p.3) avers that:

African communication systems are the various ways of passing messages which are peculiar to various communities in Africa. In passing messages from one person to another, Africans use a number of instruments, objects and phenomena. Apart from the many languages which are used to communicate in Africa; leaves, plants, brooms, gongs, flutes, clothes, hair styles, town criers form, traditional rulers, traditional festivals, plays, puppet shows, dance songs, story letting,

poetry, the opinion leaders, rituals and carnivals, names of people are used to express thought forms in the human mind.

These communications are generally divided into verbal and non-verbal, while verbal forms of communication manifest in the areas of town crier, market, village square, places of worship and visitation, the non-verbal forms of communication are reflected in colour schemes, objectifies signals, aerophones, membranophones, idiophones music, symbolic display and extra mundane communication. (Ebeze, (2002), Wilson (1990) in Kombol (2010) Ukonu and Wogu, (2006) identified the form of traditional communication system as institutional, visual, iconographic, demonstrative and extra mundane.

Extra mundane communication is a communication that involves the communicator and abstract in nature which are mainly unseen. It involves communication with the supernatural. Onuh (2007, p.30), and Kombol (2012, p.54) in Ugwu (2013, p.393) reveal that extra mundane form of communication occur between spirits and the living, the dead and the living, the supreme, the supernatural being and the living and between the various local deities, gods and goddesses and the living especially through oracles and conjures. Akpabio (2003, Pp.31) in Ugwu (2013) avers that extra mundane communication can either be bottom-up or to-down communication. According to him, the bottom-up extra-mundane communication involves attempts by human beings to get the attention of supernatural forces for a variety of reasons while to-down extra mundane communication is the feed-back aspect of

the extra-mundane communication. Akpabio (2003) notes that the manifestation of supernatural power is real and takes various forms in many communities and witchcraft is one of such manifestation.

The existence of witchcraft is well determined as the Bible recorded in Exodus 23 vs 19 that “Thou shall not suffer a witch to live”. Witchcraft practices have generated a lot of debate. While some scholars hardly believed in its existence, others do with mixed feeling. This is as its activities are shrouded in secrecy and mystery. However, few individuals have claimed to have witchcraft powers and believed they can engage in some kind of magical powers or the other. They have also claimed that they used a lot of extra-mundane communication such as invocation, rituals etc. it is against this backdrop, that the researcher interrogated the extent to which witches and wizards in witchcraft practices employ extra-mundane communication in their activities.

Objectives of the Study

The study will achieve the following objectives

- i. Determine the extent witches and wizard use extra-mundane communications in their activities.
- ii. Ascertain the extent to which witchcraft practices involved the use of extra-mundane communications.
- iii. Find the major forms of extra-mundane communications employed in witchcraft practices and operations.

Statement of the Problem

The subject witchcraft has been viewed with fear and trepidations among scholars in Nigeria. Many see it as “nogo-area of study”, yet they have not been able to deny its existence and operation. Perhaps, one of the reason why the subject of witchcraft has not been fully investigated is because of the perceived evils associated with it and fear of attack by witches and wizards. Witchcraft practices are generally an integral part of pagan religion (Buckland, 2002) but with the advent of Christianity, it was abhor among Africans because it is generally associated with Satanism. While some scholars see witchcraft practice as a form of extra-mundane communication, others does not see it as such. The question is to what extent is witchcraft practice a form of extra-mundane communication? The study therefore explores the extent to which witches and wizards make use of extra-mundane communications in its operations and the extent to which witchcraft practices could be regarded as a form of extra mundane communication. The study will also find out the various forms of extra-mundane communications that witches and wizards employ in their operations.

Like in many parts of the world, witchcraft practices is a secret of the cultures and Nigeria is not an exception. Extra-mundane communication is a supernatural communication which is embedded in belief systems and cultures. As a supernatural form of communication, the study will examine the extent to which witchcraft involves the use of extra-mundane communication such as rituals, invocation, incantations among other forms of practices that is regarded as extra-mundane. The scope of

the study is restricted to self-confessed witches and wizards in Edo and Delta states of Nigeria. The study is also restricted to only ten self-confessed witches and wizard who have agreed to share experiences with the researcher. These self-confessed witches and wizards will be drawn randomly from the two states. The study will also ascertain the existence of witchcraft practices in the two states of Edo and Delta states of Nigeria.

The concept of witchcraft is completely abstraction and cannot be investigated effectively without the initiate. The study is therefore limited to self-confessed witches and wizards. This is a major limitation. The study would have been more reliable if the researcher is an initiate. Another limitation is that witchcraft practice is shrouded in secrecy. Witchcraft is associated with evil and secrecy, and people do not like to associate with it.

Thus, information given by self-confessed witches and wizards in the study can only be taken as an attempt at unraveling the mystery of witchcraft and providing its existence and its influence on other forms of human communication such as health and cultural communications.

Conceptual Framework

Witchcraft is defined by the Marriam Webster Learning Dictionary as magical things that are done by witches: the use of magical powers obtained especially from evil spirits. It is the use of sorcery or magic. It is a communication with the devil or with a familiar spirit. Agbanusi (2016, p.210) defined witchcraft as the use of magic powers, especially evil

ones. It is the activities of witches and wizards. A witch is a woman who is believed to have magic powers, especially to do evil things. A wizard, on the other hand, is a man who is believed to have magic powers, especially to do evil things. In other words, witches and wizards carry out the same operation of witchcraft, differing only in genders.

The basic activities of witches and wizards are evil doing. There are believed to have powers to retard progress, stagnant success, change the cause of nature and generally manipulate victims at night. Two major types of witches have been identified by many observers. These are the black and white witches and wizards. It is a general opinion that the black witches always hold their meetings at road junctions, top of trees, market places, bottom of big Iroko trees and football pitches. The white witches and wizards are associated with river, seas and oceans and they hold their meetings mainly under the water, or at the bank of rivers. It is generally believed that the white witches and wizards which are referred to as Abiku in the Western part of Nigeria and Ogbanje in Eastern part of Nigeria are stronger than the black witches and wizard. It is also the opinion of some persons that the 'marine witches and wizard' (white witches and wizard) uses their magic powers to assist people. But close observation and research have shown that the two groups are evil and wicked.

Witches and wizards generally have powers to transform into birds, objects and animals either to enable them attend meetings or attack and perpetuate their evil practices. Oral belief system have shown that the black and white witches do not operate in the same way

and do not operate at the same frequencies and authorities. It is a known fact in most part of Nigeria that the white witches and wizards are loyal to the mermaid of the sea commonly referred to as a “the Queen of the Coast” which is half a fish and female human. On the other hand, the black witches and wizards are loyal to a spirit that operates from the earth.

Self-confessed witches and wizards are those who openly confessed that they practice witchcraft. Most of them become self-confessed witches and wizards as a result of sickness and diseases which befall them due to their wickedness or those that are ‘trapped’ on electric poles and top of buildings. After confession, they usually claim that they hardly attend meetings and do evil. Many of them practice herbal medicine and solely tradio-medical practitioners and so are usually described as witch doctors.

Empirical Review

Scholars have often dread researchers in the area of the meta physical world of gemology, magic, voodoo and witchcraft. This, especially witchcraft is inked with supernatural evil which manifested physically in the forms of harm, death or misfortune (Nwaoboli, Ariyeniwa, Oviasuji and Tiekuro 2021). The concept and meaning of witchcraft varies from community to community, and country to country, however, one outstanding idea is that to witchcraft is an evil operations of humans which is seen around communities and natures. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons that Joyeola-Omoyeni, Oyetade and Omoyeni (2015) avers that witchcraft is the supernatural interference in the natural community lifestyle and behaviour.

There is no gainsaying the fact that witchcraft has been existing for a very long time. In Nigeria, the belief on witchcraft is real. This is often projected in Nollywood films. Nwaoboli, Ariyeniwa, Oviasuji and Tiekuro (2012) captured this reality when they posited that:

Nollywood helps minor fictions and reality about witchcraft. It gives insight into the past, present and perhaps future of the extra-mundane world of witchcraft and thus helps form perceptions of the phenomenon by different media audiences. With its audio-visual capacity, Nollywood forms perceptions about witchcraft in the minds of people. These perceptions could however be positive, negative and neutral. For decades now, there has been a propagation of witchcraft films and home videos in Nigeria.

The above submission alluded to the fact that the existence of the witchcraft, though, subject many researchers do not want to venture into witchcraft is a craft of some set of people who possess supernatural power to influence other, things and event. It is believed that-such influence is often harmful, inhumane, immoral and unethical (Nwaoboli, Ariyeniwa, Oviasuji and Tiekuro (2012).

Jayeola-omoyeni, Oyetade and Omoyeni (2015, p.65) define witchcraft as “the belief that there are vital forces or supernatural powers that could be tapped by those who acquired such powers to reshape the behaviour of Ma” citing Jayeola-Omoyeni, Oyetade and Omoyeni, (2016), (Nwaoboli, Ariyeniwa, Oviasuji and Tiekuro (2012) submitted that:

The perception is that witches and wizards are more powerful at night. Thus, prefer to operate at night rather than in the day time where

they may be seen male witchcrafts are called wizards, while the female ones are called witches. It is believed that women are often more possessed with the spirit of witchcraft, however, this does not mean that wizards do not exist. Infact, men have been found to be in most cases the head of the witchcraft guild.

Tanzania Human Rights report (2011, p. 33) defines witchcraft as “sorcery, enchantment, bewitching, the use of instrument of witchcraft, the purported exercise of any occult power and purported possession of any occult knowledge”. Nwaoboli et al (2021) averred that illness, accidents, death, etc. they also posited that witches practice sorcery, magic, voodoo, incantation, etc.

The Existence of Witchcraft

Is there any such thing as witchcraft? While many scholars believed in its existence, others look for empirical experience to assert its existence. But in response to this question parish (2012) citing Wright (1833) observes that the first recorded witch trial in which explicit reference was made to the of familiarity in witchcraft was that of Dame Alice Kyeter, in 1324. Parish added that in defence of a witch hunt that had claimed ten victims published a report, which included reports of witches roles could assume annual form, but presented such belief as folklore rather than objective fact.

In Nigerian context there are evidences that witchcraft exists. For example, in Onicha Ugho, a living in Aniocha North Local Government Area of Delta State, witchcrafts are identified by the Izu Dibies (witch doctors) it is reported that some kind of liquidis administered to them to drink; any person who is accused of witchcraft that refuses

to drink is banished from the town. This is similar to the Bini Kingdom (present day Edo State of Nigeria) Yoruba kingdom sanders (2003) is of the view that though witchcraft operation cannot be denied, any person confessed witchcraft make such confession valid as they were not forced to make such confessions. Africans have invented methods of communications before the advent of the mass media and Christianity. Ukonu and Wogu (2006, p.1) capture this fact when they posit that:

Africans, as a people have a rich past, a thrilling communication history. But this past as often ignored and over the years has been lost to Africans romance with western culture. It is the western culture that rubbishes the African communication past and even denies it.

These forms of communication through which African interact among and between themselves are complex forms of whole. Ebeze (2002), Ansu-Kyeremeh (1998) in Akpabio (20030, Ukonu and Wogu (2006), that Kombol (2012) and Ugwu (2013) are of the view that is not only a reflection of the various African cultures and traditions, complex but include extra-mundane communication.

Extra-mundane communication involves communication with the supernatural- the dead ancestors, spirit gods or the supreme God (Ngwo, 2013), Kombol (2012) observes that extra-mundane communication occurs between spirits and the living, the dead and the living, the supreme, the supernatural being and the living and between the various local deities, gods and goddesses and the living especially through oracles and conjures.

Extra-mundane communication can be grouped into bottom-up and top-down communication (Ngwu, 2013), Akpabio (2003, p.31) avers that bottom-up communication involves attempts by human beings to get the attention of supernatural forces for a variety of reasons. These reasons range from desire to meet need such as children, money, husband, promotion, etc. top-down extra-mundane communication is the feedback from the bottom-up extra-mundane communication. (Witchcraft has been identified as one of the complex forms of communication in the traditional African systems of communication (Ebeze, 2002, Wilson (1990) in Kombol, 2010, Ukonu and Wogu (2006). It is generally refers to as a form of extra-mundane communication. However, studies have not been carried out to examine the extent to which witchcraft make use of the various forms of extra-mundane communication. This is moreso in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular where the issue of witchcraft is shrouded in secrecy.

The subject of witchcraft has fascinated people for thousands of years (Buck land, 2002). The word 'witch' comes from the old Anglo-Saxon, *wicca* or *wicca*, meaning a 'wise one' religion and magical practices have been intertwined from the beginning of mankind. Buckland, (2002) avers that witchcraft was not originally a religion in itself, but a practice and an integral part of pagan religion until the second thousand years Christianity when witchcraft and paganism was painted in a bad light.

Bucklan (2002) posits that after the inquisition and persecution which eliminated nine million people for charges

of witchcraft, scores of witches and wizard meeting surface at the dawn of the twentieth century; Buckland (2002) reported that witches had been a pre-Christian religion. And it 1951, in England, the last law against witchcraft was repealed and three years later a book written by Gerald Brousseau Gardner who professed to be an actual which was published. According to Gardner (1959), the witches of old had not all been exterminated, they had simply gone into hiding to continue their beliefs and practices without harassment.

Buchland (2020) reveals that the witchcraft that Garolner presented was not the anti-Christian, negative variety that the variety that the early church instilled in most people's minds. It was a nature-based positive religion of tolerance, love with strict laws against harming others. Witchcraft was shown to be one of the mystery religions. Garolner (1959) as cited by Buckland (2002) is of the view that no one is born a witch but was made by virtue of passing through an initiation ceremony

Theoretical Framework

The study is hinged in the Uses and Gratification Theory. The theory stipulated that the media is use by audience to meet their base needs of information dissemination among others. The theory is related to the work because the study ascertain the extent to which extra-mundane communications is use in witchcraft practices and activities by witches and wizards. Thus, extra-mundane communications channels such as incantation, invocation, voodoo, sacrifice etc. are media through which witchcraft practice are employed.

Methodology

The researcher will adopted survey method to elicit data from self-confessed and acclaimed witches and wizard in Edo and Delta states of Nigeria. Okwechime, (2016).

There is no known specific number of witches and wizards in Edo and Delta states, however, researcher selected Ten (10) self-acclaimed and

confessed witches and wizards drawn from Edo and Delta states for the study.

The researcher used the snowball sampling technique to arrived at the 10(ten) self-confessed witches and wizards in the two states because many of them decline comment. Hence, the sample size is reduced to Ten (10) respondents.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data generated from the field are presented and analyze as follows:

Table 1: Showing respondents’ reactions on the extent witchcraft practices involved the use of extra-mundane communications

Variables	SA	A	D	SD	NS	Total	X	Decision
	5	4	3	2	1			
Witchcraft practices make use of extra-mundane communications	08 80% 40	02 20% 8	- - -	- - -	- - -	10 100% 48\10	4.8	Accepted
Witchcraft practice do not make use of extra-mundane communications	- - -	- - -	02 20% 06	07 70% 14	01 10% 01	10 100% 21\10	2.1	Rejected
Witchcraft practices sometimes make use of extra-mundane communications	- - -	- - -	- - -	08 80% 16	02 10% 02	10 100% 18\10	1.8	Rejected
Witchcraft practices hardly make use of extra-mundane communications	- - -	- - -	02 20% 6	08 80% 16	- - -	10 100% 22\10	2.2	Rejected

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Data generated and presented in table one above show that witchcraft practices make use of extra-mundane

communications such as invocation, ritual practices, liberation and incantations.

Table 2: Showing the major forms of extra-mundane communication prevalent among witchcraft practice

Variables	SA	A	D	SD	NS	Total	X	Decision
	5	4	3	2	1			
Invocation\Mirror gazing	07 70% 35	02 20% 08	01 10% 03	- - -	- - -	10 100% 46\100	4.6	Accepted

Animal Ritual	10 100% 50	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	10 100% 50/100	5.0	Accepted
Magical arts\sorcery	7 70% 35	3 30% 12	- - -	- - -	- - -	10 100% 47/100	4.7	Accepted
Voodoo	6 40% 30	2 20% 8	02 20% 6	- - -	- - -	10 100% 44/100	4.4	Accepted
Animal Sacrifices	- - -	5 50% 20	3 30% 09	2 20% 04	- - -	10 100% 33/100	3.3	Rejected
Incantations\water-washing	06 30	03 12	01 03	- -	- -	10 100% 45/100	4.5	Accepted
Necromancy	- - -	08 80% 32	01 10% 01	- - -	01 100% 01	10 100% 36/100	3.6	Accepted
Conjuring\water gazing	08 80% 40	02 20% 8	- - -	- - -	- - -	10 100% 48/100	4.8	Accepted

s in Edo and Delta states.

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the study, there are seven (7) major forms of extra-mundane communication which witches and wizard engaged in witchcraft practices. These are

invocation, animal ritual, magical arts/sorcery, voodoo, incantations, necromancy and conjuring.

Table 3: Showing why witches/wizard engaged in extra-mundane communication in witchcraft activities/practices.

variables	SA	A	D	SD	NS	Total	X	Decision
	5	4	3	2	1			
To contact all supernatural powers/authorities for assistance	07 70% 35	02 20% 08	01 10% 03	- - -	- - -	10 100% 46/100	4.6	Accepted
To make things extra ordinary things happen	08 80% 40	02 20% 08	- - -	- - -	- - -	10 100% 48/100	4.8	Accepted
Witchcraft cannot be practice without extra-mundane communications	10 100% 50	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	10 100% 50/100	5.0	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the data presented in the table above, it is obvious that witchcraft activities/practices cannot be practicable without extra-mundane communication. Witches and wizards use extra-mundane

communication to interact with superior evil powers in order to appeal to them to do what they want. This implies that extra-mundane communication is essential in witchcraft operations, practices and activities

Discussion of Findings

The study show that extra-mundane communications is used by witches and wizards in witchcraft practices to basically relate with other superior evil force for assistance to carry out an operation. This is just as the major forms of extra-mundane communication used by witches and wizards are invocation, mirror gazing, water-washing/watching, animals rituals, voodoo, incantations, necromancy and conjuring.

Other forms of rituals includes stepping on broken bottles and sharp objects, fire crossing, jumping and dancing around fire. The study confirmed the work of researchers and scholars such as Luhrmann (1989) Buckland (2002) and Tayeola-Omoyeni, Oyetade & Omeyeni (2015) that witchcraft is the art of using magic.

Conclusion

The concept of witchcraft practices though shredded in secrecy is not far-fetched and it is very much with us. Witchcraft practices greatly involves the use of extra-mundane communications such as libation, necromancy, incantation, animal sacrifice, mirror gazing, sacrifices in road junctions to contact higher powers for assistance in achieving their aims and objectives. Thus, extra-mundane communication is the form of communication used in witchcraft practices.

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