

## **AN EPISTEMIC INVESTIGATION INTO THE NATURE AND REALITY OF WITCHCRAFT**

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### **Abstract:**

From primordial time, the mention of witchcraft send shiver, fear and dread down the spine of non-initiates who dread the harmful proclivities of witches. This, as a result has garnered a lot of research into what witchcraft is all about. Is witchcraft a reality or just a figment of people's imagination? If it is real, what is its nature and characteristics? Does it have a traceable origin? How does the Igbo African perceive witchcraft? It is noteworthy that scholars from different disciplines and cultures have in their expertise demonstrated a considerable effort in their desire to understand and explain the phenomenon of witchcraft. In the same way, theories have been proposed and propounded ranging from diffusionist to psychological, sociological and anthropological seeking to unravel the mystery of witchcraft. Our effort therefore, is to employ a philosophical tool, the methods of hermeneutics and analysis with which we shall dig into the various conceptions of witchcraft; its reality and possibility and the rationale behind the practice and applications. This indeed, will show a great difference between every other approaches that have been used in the study of witchcraft; (sociological, anthropological, psychological and religious) since the nature of witchcraft is metaphysical as shall be demonstrated latter, scientific approach of investigation and other approaches may not be effective in avid esoteric matters hence, it defiles every scientific explanations. Consequently, philosophy being the science of all reality and a systematic interpretation of all experiences and the search for ultimate truth however becomes the best approach to proper examination of the nature magical or mysterious phenomena such as witchcraft and other paranormal occurrences.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The belief in witchcraft and its attendant consequences is a common phenomenon in African communities and our discussions on the previous works have been a clear demonstration of the universal nature of such a concept and its phenomenon principally among the Igbo. Essentially, in our earlier essay, it has been shown that what is magic and its application is basically an interaction between entities, forces and spirits for the purposes of actualization of human desires which could result in the maximization of one's happiness and of the people especially in pursuing a just course or in promoting social ills with its untold consequences; pain, grief, and evil of varying degrees.

However, the use of magical power in whatever form it manifests is often viewed as an individual practice; but no matter how individualistic magic seems to be, it is always a social phenomenon, either it causes social tension and conflict or it is at one point or other a panacea for social control.

Our major priority in this essay therefore, is to make a thorough examination of certain systems that are related to magic accordingly are regarded as different ways of manifestations of magical power. Concepts such as witchcraft, sorcery, divination, traditional medicine, occultism, exorcism etc. shall be properly analyzed by concretely establishing their possibilities using testimonies and practical cases recorded from various Igbo communities where a good number of occurrences have been described as magical and occult and individuals seen as agents, possessors or carriers of an invisible force yet alive and active. Nevertheless, this will enable our further understanding of magical power as we set to situate its phenomenon in the corpus of human knowledge perhaps determine the undergrounding world-view on which it is to be studied. Equally, effort shall be made to shade light on the use and significance of sacrifice in magical systems. We therefore begin with the most widely used concept and most dreaded of all the magical systems - witchcraft.

### **WITCHCRAFT: A BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW**

The very mention of the word witchcraft brings to the mind of many the workings that are ominous, dark and forbidden. Witchcraft is known all over the world and it is an area of immense interest in our modern age that coincides with the growing interest in the paranormal world. Often times, witchcraft and sorcery are being used interchangeably, but both are known to have existed since time immemorial in various societies and cultures around the world. For instance, in ancient Greece, "witchcraft exists as early as the time when Homer lived."<sup>1</sup> "The legendary Medea was considered as the best known sorceress in classical times. The Roman Horace describes two witches in his famous satires."<sup>2</sup> There are several references to witches in the scripture, Saul was recorded to have consulted the witch of Endor (1 Samuel, 28). Nabuchi, however, remarks that:

Witchcraft has been as old as creation and the study of religions and mysticism. Each age has taught with it a new concept about the study, understanding and appreciation of witchcraft. Various religious leaders have accused their opponents of witchcraft. The early Christians especially in the days of Saul gave instructions that witches should be eliminated following that decree; all those suspected to be involved in the practice were all gathered and killed. In the early stages of modern Christianity, and especially when man's investigations into the so called unknown took greater dimension, scientist who considered the church views about certain realities of existence as obsolete and incorrect, and hence came out boldly with a

doctrine, theorem or philosophical exposition were all accused of witchcraft and accordingly killed in cold blood.<sup>3</sup>

Witchcraft, as it is sometimes called 'the craft' requires no belief in specific gods or goddesses and is not a specific spiritual path. Thus, there are witches who practice a variety of religions besides pagan ones such as Judaism and Christianity. In reality, the belief in witchcraft is a universal thing though; it has appeared from many countries of the world but still very profound and pervasive in most parts of Africa at present. The fear of witchcraft in African societies is so dominant to the point that it has almost changed the life style of the traditional African from communalism to individualism; interpersonal relationship is often times destroyed due to conflicts and accusations of witchcraft; the people are so paranoid that some have sort protection from other means outside African traditional religion. E.O. John reacting to the obvious influence of witchcraft phenomenon on African society rightly says:

The concept of witchcraft, the practice of witchcraft, the multiplication of witchcraft initiates and the corresponding effect in our African society had in no small measure affected economic, social, political, moral, axiological, and mental growth of Africans. Our belief system and seeming prevalence of confession of persons of varied ages of possessing witchcraft powers call for concern... In family circles, premature deaths, barrenness, impotence and unnecessary and incessant misfortune are linked with the practice of witchcraft.<sup>4</sup>

In another development, J.O. Charles, a professor of social Anthropology in a paper delivered at the 14th Spiritan International School of Theology (SIST), International Missiological Symposium argued that the city is afflicted by new disease called witchcraftmania which he attributed to be the source of unending frictions and altercations in families, churches and society. Though, he concludes that while belief in witchcraft is real witchcraft itself is an illusion. In a summary he therefore articulates the situation thus:

The Nigeria society is obsessed with the beliefs in witchcraft and associated practices against witchcraft attack. Nothing, even illness, death and failure in business, happens naturally or out of carelessness, omission and commission unless caused by witchcraft. Such beliefs have led to practices where people fight against malevolent influence of witchcraft by consulting witch doctors, sorcerers, diviners, necromancers, spiritualists, priests and occultists for rituals and assignments. These beliefs and practices have obvious consequences on man, religion, church and society: without man, the triangularity of religion, church and society will not exist. The paper argues alongside Evans-Pritchard that the belief in witchcraft is real but witchcraft itself is not real. Such beliefs lead man to an unending accusation of relatives and friends of witchcraft. The society is afflicted by a new disease called witchcraftmania, a source of

unending frictions and altercations in families, churches and society. Man is afraid and suspicious of weaving an enduring relationship with fellow man. This has made an average Nigerian asocial, tending towards self seclusion and religiosity but neglecting economic problems. The church is multiplying at a geometric proportion with algebraic formula to amputate witchcraft through prayers and assignments, with attendant economic burden on man. The society is confused, impoverished and socially castrated.<sup>5</sup>

The above assertions call for a great concern since the general consensus among people particularly of African societies is that witches and wizards are full of malignity; and the belief of witchcraft reality is not just negative but deep rooted and overwhelming that they always rationalize every mishap, economic, political, social and even physical to witchcraft. This is however because, Africans have a knowledge on the subject of magic, sorcery and witchcraft; their beliefs are always shrouded in the fear of the unknown. Mbiti remarks that:

Every African who has grown up in the traditional environment will no doubt know something about this mystical power which often is experienced or manifests itself in form of magic, divination, witchcraft and mysterious phenomena that seem to defy even immediate scientific explanation... Every African living in a village can tell an almost endless number of such stories, to an outsider they sound more like fiction than reality. But the whole psychic atmosphere of African village life is filled with the belief in this mystical power.<sup>6</sup>

In another instance Mbiti equally affirms that: "The most disturbing element in African life is the fear of bad magic, sorcery and witchcraft. Every African person shares in that fear, belief in the function and dangers of bad magic, sorcery and witchcraft is deeply rooted in African life, and in spite of modern education and religions like Christianity and Islam, it is very difficult to eradicate this belief."<sup>7</sup> The concept of witchcraft therefore is normally treated as a cultural ideology, a means of explaining human misfortune by blaming it either on a supernatural entity or a known person in the community. It is against this backdrop that Africans and beyond shares in the belief that witches are predominantly women, old and common people of the society. They are more readily suspected of and prosecuted for witchcraft by virtue of their sex and status and are always regarded as being wicked and indifferent; and will often desire to hurt others in their permanent state of anger against the society. Hence, once there is a social tension, conflict or disaster witchcraft becomes an ideology for explaining calamities that befell the entire communities. Omoyajowo in his comparative study of witchcraft notes that:

...Traditional Yoruba belief shared also by Shona people of South Africa is that witches are mostly women flying about at night through bird familiars especially the night jar, while the Nupe believe that although there are male

witches, women witches are more dangerous. People usually accused of witchcraft are old women, ugly women, barren women and poor people... Again, it is the poor people, old people and beggarly people who are often accused because as socially handicapped people they are naturally regarded as wicked members who are capable of bringing disaster upon the society through witchcraft.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, beliefs in witchcraft and its resultant witch-hunts are found globally in many cultures. Today mostly in sub Saharan Africa, and historically notable in Early modern Europe of the 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, "where witchcraft came to be seen as a vast diabolical conspiracy against Christianity, and accusations of witchcraft led to large-scale witch-hunts especially in Germanic Europe."<sup>9</sup> It may be difficult to state the exact number of deaths recorded during this witch-hunt. Most writers agree that more witches were killed than those who lost their lives during first and second world wars put together. But there are estimates running into hundreds of thousands which were "based on records of the spectacle, which trailed organized elimination of witches in Europe and North America. When witches in Africa, Oceania and primitive America are included in the lot, the number becomes so staggering."<sup>10</sup> Offiong however states that:

While it is impossible to state categorically the number of 'witches' executed, there have been various estimates. One estimated says that following the bull of Innocent VIII in 1454, some 300,000 witches were killed. The persecution is said to have been strongest in Germany where about 100,000 witches were burnt. For England one estimate puts the number at 90, 000 under James 1, while another says the total number for Great Britain was 30,000. Regardless of the exact number of witches killed, the important thing is that there were persecutions which resulted in thousands of deaths.<sup>11</sup>

William James therefore Opines that: "Philosophy deals with the principles of explanation that underlies all things without exception, the elements common to gods and men and animals and stones, the first whence and the last wither of the cosmic process, the conditions of all knowing and the most general rules of human conduct."<sup>12</sup> Notably, it is within this frame of thought that we therefore make our discussion on witchcraft and other magical powers that shall be given attention latter. We move further to examine the nature and conceptualizations of witchcraft.

### **THE NATURE AND CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF WITCHCRAFT**

The controversy surrounding the understanding and explanation of witchcraft significantly in African society like other societies of the world is until now unresolved as there have been many different conceptions of the term or concept 'witchcraft'. Perhaps, this is as a result of the fact that "contemporaries themselves assigned different meanings to the word, and since they also used many other terms as the equivalents of witch and witchcraft."<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the secrecy and mystery involved in witchcraft and

the resolution of the advent initiates in the cult not to reveal any worthwhile information concerning their activities have made the study of witchcraft a difficult quest. However, there are some initiates who are liberal and have been willing to give insight into the age-long covert operations of witches. Meanwhile, witchcraft is often synonymously used with sorcery and magic. This explains why witchcraft is sometimes defined "as the use of magic in an attempt to achieve ends considered socially harmful to their victims."<sup>14</sup> Most scholars simply refer to magic and sorcery as witchcraft. John explains that: "In most African societies, the terms witchcraft, magic, sorcery and medium are used interchangeably. This is because it is generally believed that without the powers of witchcraft, the sorcerer, magician, enchanter, medium, etc. cannot function to a greater capacity beyond the physical realm of matter."<sup>15</sup> A witch is described as "one who can do or seen to do strange things beyond the known power of art and ordinary nature and humans with supernatural powers; they may be born with these powers or learn them through initiation,"<sup>16</sup> which can take any form including gifts and edibles. Some are believed to be born witches; others buy or acquire witchcraft intentionally. In parts of Ghana for example, it is held that witchcraft may be bought for a small sum or can be obtained from demons or the dead, others think that it is an infection that can be taken with food or swallowed accidentally."<sup>17</sup> A witch is also seen in the context of ambiguity and deception. Doualas described him as one "whose inside is corrupt, who is a perverted figure, a reversal of the way things should be, a deceiver whose normal appearance masks a corrupt interior, and who attacks either by poisoning or soul-sucking. He is the attacking evil disguised as a wolf in sheep's clothing. There is an ambiguity of what the internal rustic and unsocialized self (id) feels."<sup>18</sup> Witchcraft has equally been perceived as "an art of the wise but feared by all."<sup>19</sup> It is belief that "the spirits of living human beings can be sent out of the body on errands of doing havoc to other persons in body, mind, or estate."<sup>20</sup> They are therefore, "those that possess the inherent psychic power to send out their spirits invisibly, or through lower creatures to harm others or do havoc to other persons."<sup>21</sup> John express it as "a psychic ability wherein supernatural powers are derived from the nature of certain herbs, barks of trees, or any other element that possesses supernatural powers. In this process, the art of witchcraft enables the person to move out of his 'real' with a far greater ease, unlike astral travel that has to do with a lot of concentration."<sup>22</sup>

In collaboration with the about conceptions Quarcoopome observes that: "A witch is a person who is believed to be possessed by a witch spirit, this witch spirit can be sent out on errands and is thought to be capable of causing harm to people and to a lesser extent do good to others. Thus, witchcraft is belief in the possession of some supernatural powers by which evil or harm can be effect and good deed done."<sup>23</sup> In a more conscious elaboration of this conception of witchcraft as a psychic ability and

voluntary out of body experience, a quality peculiar to witches. Nnabuchi offers a more explicit explanation of witchcraft and the personality of a witch when he writes:

Witchcraft is the application of natural endowments beyond the grasp of the ordinary average person. Such applications are usually beyond the laws of physical science and explainable techniques. It border on the concept, which separates spirit from the body. While the later is fully resting, the former is involved in controlled expedition, exploring the world as it best suits it. When either such expedition has direct impact on another individual negatively or positively, the affected individual is, said to have been, attacked by a witch. Because it is a technique exclusive to very few, poor, and old persons and fuelled, of course, by envy and jealousy, religious and cultural nonentities took advantage of the physical weaknesses of witches to stamp them out. The destruction of witches ought not to have taken place because it is an act, which borders on abstractionism whose proof cannot be, substantiated in law for conviction to be effected.<sup>24</sup>

In a further exposition with respect to Igbo perception of witchcraft he states:

In Igbo cosmology, a witch is, known as Amusu, an expert and an indispensable authority in any chosen profession. A witch is therefore an indispensable authority in out-of-body excursion. The witch develops the technique of separating his spirit from the body, and runs the spirit as he desire in a controlled form, as if he is in a full conscious state, and performs acts of spirituality as valid and effective as physical owe. To him, a spiritual assault or blessing is as valid as a physical assault or blessing. It is more reassuring when he knows that his opponents have no defense or resistance and therefore at liberty to completely execute his programmes uninhibited. Witchcraft is therefore a product of cultural and religious resentment to a phenomenon whose explanation is not only beyond their ill luck, ill health and barrenness. One's appreciation of witchcraft is a concept, which can be, compared to a rope of three distinct strands Satan, poverty and old age and is being pulled at one end by ignorance, and at the other end by the law of the jungle. Before you crucify me, let it be clearly, stated that ignorance is different from illiteracy, because a great genius can still be ignorant of the operational sequence of nature. Success staves envy, the root of conspiracy, which in turn graduates into furious attacks, spiritually.<sup>25</sup>

However, in all its usage, witchcraft mostly connotes the destructive employment of mystical power. Mbiti, put it that it is a "term used more popularly and broadly to describe all sorts of evil employment of mystical power, generally in secret fashion,"<sup>26</sup> while Parrinder on the other hand uses it to designate "harmful employment of mystical power in all its different manifestations."<sup>27</sup> Stoller, equally maintains that "Songhay witches were supposed to eat the souls of their victims. They were the most malevolent force in the Songhay Cosmos, continuously causing illness and death along their

path."<sup>28</sup> In the same manner, among the Urhobo witches are classified into two categories as: "a wizard/witch who uses his/her power in healing and generally for the good of the society is known as Adjene (celebrated witch who had confessed his/her sins and resolved to do good).

In most cases, *Adjene* are *ebo* (medicine men) while *Orieda* is a witch who resolves to do evil and whose activities are mainly executed during nocturnal operations. Nevertheless, instances abound where witchcraft is being perceived as magic or "part of black magic."<sup>30</sup> Worthy of mention is that when early modern Europeans used the word witchcraft, they were however, almost and always referring to either or both of two types of activity: "one being the practice of *maleficium*, the other being diabolism. They were quite different but related types of activity denoted by the word witchcraft."<sup>31</sup> Wiseman, analyzing the activities according to the European perception of witchcraft points out that:

The first was the practice of harmful, black or maleficent magic, the performance of harmful deeds by means of some sort of extraordinary, mysterious, occult, preternatural or supernatural power. This type of magic would include the killing of a person by piercing a doll made in his image, inflicting sickness on a child by reciting a spell, bringing down hail on crops by burning enchanted substances, starting a fire by leaving a hexed sword in a room, and causing impotence in a bridegroom by tying knots in a piece of leather and leaving it in his proximity. These acts were usually referred to in Latin as *maleficia* and in English were sometimes called witchcraft. The agents of these deeds were usually referred to in Latin as malefic or *maleficia*, the Latin words, that were commonly used to identify witches during the late medieval and early modern periods.<sup>32</sup>

As a matter of facts, it was in the performance of *maleficia* that European witchcraft most closely resembles the perception and practice of witchcraft in primitive and non-European societies today. The performance of *maleficium* is only one type of the two types of activity contained in the early modern European definition of witchcraft. The second concerns the relationship that existed between the witch and the Devil, the supernatural foe of the Christian God and the personification of evil. A witch says levack, is:

A person who not only performs harmful magic but who also made a pact with the Devil and paid some sort of homage to him. Witchcraft was therefore diabolism, the worship of the Devil. Two types of activity that witches were accused of - magic and diabolism - were closely related, for at this time it was widely believed that a witch acquired her powers to harm people magically by making a pact with devil.<sup>33</sup>

The above definition is quite evident when one considers the general perception of witchcraft by Christians in which they see witchcraft as a direct attack on Christianity; who are elusively evil and their powers demonic. Below summaries a perfect picture of their view, thus:

Witchcraft, as commonly understood, involved the idea of a diabolical pact or at least an appeal to the intervention of the spirits of evil. In such cases this supernatural aid is usually invoked whether to compass the death of some obnoxious person, or to awaken the passion of love in those who are the objects of desire, or to call up the dead, or to bring calamity or impotence upon enemies, rivals, and fancied oppressors. The list is not exhaustive; it represents some of the principal purposes that witchcraft has been made to serve at nearly all periods of the world's history. Witchcraft concerned with the producing of effects beyond the natural powers of man by agencies other than the Divine. In the traditional belief, the witches or wizards were believed to enter into the witches or wizards were believed to enter into a compact with the devil, adjured Christ, and the sacraments, observed the witches' Sabbath. They perform infernal rites which often took the shape of a parody of the mass or the offices of the church. They associate with prince of Darkness, and in return receive from him preternatural powers. These powers include riding through the air on a broomstick, assuming different shapes at will, and tormenting their chosen victims. In reciprocal gesture, "familiar spirits was placed at their disposal, able and willing to perform any service that might be needed to further their nefarious purposes. Witchcraft manifest in magical potions, which may produce impotence or abortion, effect change of a person's disposition from love to hate, transform man into an animal, or the intercourse of incubi and succubi with human beings.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, Offiong in his study of the Ibibio Witchcraft, Sorcery, Magic and Social Order, confers on witchcraft the tag of anti-social or a social behaviour that deviates from cultural expectations. Such abnormality in behaviour is coded in not greeting people, not showing or expressing sorrow at misfortunes befalling others in the community, being hard-hearted, looking mean and unkempt, looking for too much gain in any transaction and engaging in illicit sexual behaviour, among several others. He therefore states regarding their mysterious powers and activities, that:

The Ibibio consider witches as a serious threat to the entire community. Witchcraft is thus an antisocial act that defies collective conscience; witches are humans with some mysterious or supernatural power with which they can and do harm their fellow human beings. Witchcraft, to the Ibibio, is the psychic act through which socially disapproved supernatural techniques influence events... they conceive of witchcraft as unequivocally evil, as destroying life (primarily through mysterious wasting diseases), and as eating the soul of their victim, thereby causing the person's death. Witches are active at night and cannot be seen or discovered by the uninitiated.<sup>35</sup>

At length, analysis has shown that witchcraft is a universal concept/phenomenon and both Westerns and Africans have something(s) common in their various perceptions and beliefs in witchcraft. In most of the African societies and culture, though their perceptions are the same yet, they have different names or terminologies for witchcraft. Witches are called *Aye, Aze, Adyene/Orieda, Obayito, Abalosi, Ifot, Sunsum*, and *Amosu* in Yoruba, *Ton*, *Urhobo*, *Twi*, *Nyakyusa*, *Ibibio*, *Akan* and *Igbo* respectively. However, before moving into the examination of the reality of witchcraft, it will be most necessary to briefly but intensively take a critical look at the history of witchcraft and how such a concept became an object of circular and academic discussion for centuries; influenced not just events and beliefs but humanity as a whole such that no account of human history will be ever considered complete without making reference to witchcraft, either as a belief or a reality.

### **THE REALITY OF WITCHCRAFT**

Many definitions have been given and a good number of theories also propounded about the concept, phenomenon, existence and reality of witchcraft; to the point that one can go on almost indefinitely quoting extracts to show the general attitude towards witchcraft and its belief; although there is no contention about "the fact that most primitive societies, including almost all African societies believe in witchcraft"<sup>36</sup> as a reality. But then, the contemporary attitude of scholars and church authorities raises the questions to the validity of such claim. However, their general view can be summarized in the words of J.R. Crawford, who asserts that "witchcraft is essentially a psychic act and is, objectively speaking impossible."<sup>37</sup> Most at times, it is often referred to at least by skeptics as an imagined crime and elaborates fantasy that has no foundation in reality. Evans-Pritchard was explicit when he says "witches, the Azande conceive them, clearly cannot exist."<sup>38</sup> Danner takes note of these views in these well articulated lines when he says:

However, some western investigators and a few African scholars have denied the reality of witchcraft activity. For instance Evans Pritchard declared, 'witchcraft is an imaginary offence because it is impossible. A witch cannot do what is supposed to do any others like him may have been deceived by the fact that there are no concrete external object connected with the practice of witchcraft. The scientific mind would want tangible proof of a spiritual activity. A more sympathetic observer, Margaret field remarked in her book "The Religion and Medicine of the Eta" that witchcraft distinctive features is that there is no palpable apparatus connected with it, no ceremonies, incantations, or invocations that the witch has to perform. It is simply projected at the wall of the mind'. Thus the absence of any visible external objects connected with witchcraft as in case of magic and medicine with their charms and amulets do not necessarily mean that belief in witchcraft is gross superstition."<sup>39</sup>

Recently, in an attempt to dissuade witch-hunting in Nigeria, two Nigeria Catholic Bishops has asked the synod of Bishops for Africa to "make a clear commitment to educating Catholics about the fact that while the devil exist, witchcraft does not."<sup>40</sup> Bishop Augustine Akabueze was also quoted as saying "witches do not exist and so the accusations are always false."<sup>41</sup> As a sociologist of Western upbringing, D.A. Offiong had to explain away witchcraft as a kind of defense mechanism in the face of problems that defy explanation in the African set up. Moreover, in a more conscious attempt to end the persecution of innocent men, women and children, activists and intellectuals in Africa and Europe are denying the existence of witches and promoting the belief that witchcraft is an irrational superstition; offering science a reason for many of the causes ascribed to the agency of witchcraft. Those who were tried as witches therefore, are viewed as innocent victims of a deluded judiciary and an oppressive legal system. Charles, in a recent publication lamented as he argues that witchcraft is not real but the belief in witchcraft, hence accusations are mere speculations based on delusion. He therefore remarks:

The question of the reality of witchcraft is one upon which it is not easy to pass a confident judgment. In the face of forly scripture and the teaching of the fathers and theologians, the abstract possibility of a pact with the Devil and a diabolical interference in human affairs can hardly be derived. However, no one can read the literature of witchcraft beliefs and practices without realizing the awful cruelties attached thereat and without being convinced that the 99 cases out of 100 the allegations rest upon nothing better than pure delusion/suspicion. It has also been observed that a good number of them even without prosecution, fear of torture made confessions of the victims, often involving all kinds of satanistic horrors; this has been described elsewhere as momentary insanity.<sup>42</sup>

Also, worthy of mention is the popularized argument to explain away the reality of witchcraft from the point of view of psychology where witches are seen as people suffering from imaginary obsession and an effect due to stress resulting in neurosis, hysteria and psychic maladjustment grossly miss interpreted as witchcraft. In a more detailed account and analysis Dannar captures this argument thus:

Attempts have been made to explain away the phenomenon of witchcraft. Psychologically it is said that telepathy may be at the root cause of the belief in witchcraft. It is argued that people with strong will power can impose upon the personality of others either to bless or to curse. The witch with his reportedly strong will-power always operates psychologically to cause first psychic and then physical disaster. From the same psychological base it is further held that witches suffer from imaginary obsession that they have the power to harm others. Thus if someone wished a relative ill luck or harm and the fellow becomes ill or dies then the witch believes that she has caused the

sickness or death of that relation. In addition to guilt complex, it is postulated that the nature of modern societies and the inability to cope with the stress and strains of a money economy has produced high incidence of neurosis, hysteria and psychic maladjustment which have been blamed on witchcraft. The incidence of witchcraft belief is also, blamed on the psychological effect of negative publicity given in the mass media to people (even under aged children) confessing to heinous and imaginary crimes; also stories and pictures of medicine men or spiritualists exorcising witches and the activities of anti-witchcraft societies or groups in handling suspected witches are seen and heard in the media.<sup>43</sup>

He however contends:

But it does appear that the psychological factors mentioned may be necessary but not sufficient to explain the activity of witchcraft. It is significant to note that the traditional African draws a distinction between an illness caused by psychological factors like strong will-power, guilt complex and neurosis on the one hand and illness caused by witchcraft on the other hand. Guilt conscience is a fact of human experience no matter how less sophisticated the society is and the African is not all that native as to know the difference between the negative influence of guilt conscience and witchcraft activity. In his consciousness witchcraft activity transcends mere ill feelings.<sup>44</sup>

Consequently, critical mind would therefore ask, what is the validity of all these assertions; how do we explain the reality of witchcraft to the satisfaction of scientific skepticism; are sorcerers witches, if yes how and if no, what is the difference; will this phenomenon ever stop? It is important to note that "what counts in any attempt at social prognosis is not the Yes or No that sums up the facts and arguments which lead up to it but those facts and arguments themselves. They contain all that is scientific"<sup>45</sup> or philosophical in the final result. Basically, in discussing the reality of witchcraft, it is imperative first to distinguish between the two main components of the concept: *maleficium* and *diabolism*; these elements are common in all the definitions and different conceptions of witchcraft as the possession and employment of mystical or magical powers to do evil by making a pact with the devil. In few places where these elements were not specifically mentioned, the expression explicitly implies the same or can most probably be interpreted as such. They happen to form the basis of witchcraft accusations, trials and prosecutions; and any discuss on the reality of witchcraft without properly, understanding their slight but obvious difference(s) would most likely impede any effort to establish the reality of the concept, 'witchcraft'. *Maleficium* which is most at times referred to as witchcraft is "the performance of harmful, black, or maleficent magic; the performance of harmful deeds by means of some sort of extraordinary, mysterious, occult, preternatural or supernatural power."<sup>46</sup> It include the performance of all kinds of evil deeds, ranging from inflicting all forms

of sickness on people, casting of spell, killing people through evil means and other malignancy.

"The essential characteristics of these deeds are that they are magical rather than religious and harmful rather than beneficial."<sup>47</sup> *Maleficium* has a solid basis in reality, in that certain individuals in virtually all societies do in fact practice harmful or evil magic. Levack in his opinion shows that regarding the reality of such deeds in the past, there is an abundance of physical, legal and literary evidence. He indeed observes that:

In ancient Rome, for example, individuals were known to inscribe curses on lead tablets, dedicate that tablet to demons, and then drive nails through the tablets. We know that this is a form of sorcery which is called *defixio*, was actually practiced, since the tablets themselves have survived. In similar fashion the doll and other paraphernalia used in image magic have survived from many societies in the past. When necromancers were prosecuted in the Middle Ages, the tools of their trade were usually produced as evidence of their guilt. And the literature of magic - the hundreds of manuals and guides to the practice of both white and black magic that have survived from many different historical periods - all provide ample proof that people have in fact practiced sorcery and continue to do so today.<sup>48</sup>

Again, it appears our concept of *maleficium* comes very close to, but nevertheless cannot be equated with that of sorcery. Although, there is no universally accepted definition of sorcery, but in virtually all contexts the word denotes the practice of magic by some sort of mechanical manipulative process. Sorcery is an acquired skill. "It might involve the destruction of an image of a person in order to bring him harm, the pronunciation of a spell, or the use of potion."<sup>49</sup> Much attention will not be given to sorcery here but for the purpose of our ongoing discussion sorcery can be distinguished from *maleficium* on many grounds among which historian's states as follows. Thus:

The first is that in the view of some scholars sorcery can be beneficial as well as harmful. In that sense it is a broader category. The second is that some maleficent acts do not involve the use of any particular technique, substance or paraphernalia. In that sense it is a more limited category. *Maleficium* can be the result of a witch's general power to inflict harm rather than her practice of any particular art. One example of this type of *maleficium* in Europe was the harm allegedly caused to individuals by the witch's evil eye. Another was the harm done to a person by some completely internal act of the witch, such as wishing that a person were dead. These actions were certainly *maleficia* in every sense of the word, but they were not acts of sorcery."<sup>50</sup>

Apart from the practice of *Maleficium* as one of the two types of activity contained in our definition of witchcraft as already stated, the second element concerned the relationship that existed between the witch and the devil; using Lerack's expression,

"the supernatural foe of the Christian God and the personification of evil."<sup>51</sup> A witch is seen as a person who not only performed harmful magic but who also made a pact with the Devil and remains loyal to him. Witchcraft therefore termed diabolic, the supposed worship of the Devil. It is important to state that, the issue of diabolism is what poses a big difficulty if not impossible in understanding the true nature, practice and reality of witchcraft. The seeming use of the term witchcraft as diabolic is only a mere belief, and that is why the two elements *maleficium* and diabolism are two related activities that denote witchcraft not just in African belief but beyond.

However, "it is not the reality of the belief that is under examination. No matter how vivid our ideas of spirits and witches, the vividness alone cannot vouchsafe for the objective self-existence of what is believe."<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, *maleficium* and diabolism evidently are quite different and this is well demonstrated by Nicolas Remy, in his analysis of witchcraft in the early modern Europe in his work *Demonolatory*, where he clearly expressed that these elements are different though related. Thus he enunciates: "There were therefore two quite different but related types of activity denoted by the word witchcraft as it was used in early modern Europe, one being the practice of *maleficium*, the other being diabolism. Both notions were contained in the prevailing stereotype of the witch, so much so that the presence of one usually implied that of the other."<sup>53</sup> The historian LeVack in a further clarification reveals that:

... witchcraft sometimes connoted only one of these two ideas. On the one hand, some persons were accused of witchcraft simply on the basis of having attended the Sabbath, without any evidence that they had performed *maleficia* or 'practiced witchcraft'. On the other hand, some individuals were accused of performing *maleficium* but avoided the additional charge of diabolism. This latter situation usually occurred in countries where witchcraft accusations came from below, which means that they came from the witches' neighbours rather than from judicial official, and when they were not embellished by judges and prosecutors who were preoccupied with diabolical fantasies. Neighbours of witches were generally much more concerned about the misfortunes that they thought they had suffered as a result of a witch's magical power than they were about the witch's alleged dealings with the Devil. But ideas of diabolism were shared mainly by scholars, Lawyers, judges, and magistrates, the literate and ruling classes of society and witches were generally accused of such activities when these members of the upper classes either brought charges against witches of their own initiative or used judicial torture to force people accused of *maleficium* to confess to diabolical activities.<sup>54</sup>

Haven established these differences between what we call witchcraft and the practice of sorcery and their relationship with the devil; it is evident that sorcery is not witchcraft though most sorcerers cannot be denied of being witches. As

such, it may be argued without any fear of being fallacious that witches are sorcerers but not all sorcerers are witches as it is obvious in our analysis of these two elements and activities. They may be closely related in their intents to cause harm but while one "operates by making use of palpable magical apparatus, the other depends on psychic powers."<sup>55</sup> We therefore sum this distinction with the submission of Offiong, when he categorically states:

It is clear in both Europe and Africa that witches and sorcerers are treated alike; generally there is a little distinction in African societies. The fact is that one is real and the other imagined. Sorcerer is real in that a great number of people in both Europe and Africa have applied to a vast range of spells, charms, talismans and rituals so as to invite the occult to their aid, or defend themselves against an attack. The imagined act has to do with witches that nobody can actually see. Sorcery and sorcerers are nothing mystical. Witchcraft is the "natural exercise of evil" by person who are possessed by malevolent but sometimes innate power which can be employed to hurt people. Witches embody the workings of evil. Sorcery, on the other hand, involves the "unnatural exercise of evil" by any person who may wish to employ the power of evil, through the application of appropriate instruments and processes, so as to destroy or hurt an enemy or rival. One engages in sorcery as an ordinary person and not as a witch, but one hastens to add here that the Ibibio believe that there are very few sorcerers (if any) who are not also witches.<sup>56</sup>

The above submission however, brings us back to the matter under our examination, the reality of witchcraft. How real is witchcraft? Of what kind is it? And on what grounds do proponents claim either that witchcraft is real or a mere imagination? Those who alleged that witchcraft is unreal defend their position maintaining that for anything to be real, it must conform to the observational test of the five senses either with or without the aid of scientific equipments. Oluwole succinctly put it that:

The demand of those who deny reality to witchcraft is that anything that we designated as real must be whether actual in the sense of conformity with what exists in nature, or true in the sense of fitting into a pattern, a model, a standard; in short into a system whose outline is already well known. Anyone who calls witchcraft an illusion seems to say that since it does not cohere with a body of known facts, it cannot itself be a fact.<sup>57</sup>

The simple explanation is that the truth of any assertion exist only on the condition that the judgment conforms objectively to what is; the agreement between the statement of fact and actual or situation which the judgment claims to describe, "Fidelity to objective reality."<sup>58</sup> Therefore, when the claim of those who belief in the existence of witchcraft does not pass the observational or correspondence test, the conclusion is that it is not real. Yet African speaks of witchcraft with emphasis of certainty. In the instance T.H.

Mbug, a Diocesan Priest of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bamenda in Cameroon, speaking the existence and fear of witchcraft affirms that:

Fear of witchcraft grips both the learned and rustic. It paralyses the Christian and the non-Christians, unnerves the western philosopher as well as the medical doctor, and does not discriminate between rich and poor. The impact on society is too much and something must be done. Families have been broken, marriages gone unto rocks, people abandoned to die miserably and others condemned to prison life, because of Witchcraft Problems. Only one who is not serious with his life and the lives of others would consider all these problems as trifles.<sup>59</sup>

In another instance Maduagwu equally emphasizes when he writes:

To make matters worse, the belief in witches is not only among the illiterate folks in African villages but also among the educated class and policy makers. I can attest that as a participant observer in Nigeria and especially in the course of researching this work, I have spoken to many Nigerian University students, academic colleagues, Christian clerics, security agents and policy makers. Nearly everyone I spoke to still believes in the existence of witches and in their powers to do harm to people. This can be further buttressed by the findings of perceptions of selected Nigeria elites and students of the former three regional universities in Nigeria (University of Nigeria Nsukka: University of Ibadan; and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria), as presented in the next section.<sup>60</sup>

The above instances portray the intensity to which we Africans believe in the reality of witchcraft. But the level of emphasis and certainty to which we demonstrate this reality is mainly on the belief and judgment which is quite subjective. And that is why when scholars and philosophers make statements such as below, it calls for a great concern. Thus:

It is surprising that the issue of witchcraft has not yet attracted serious philosophical studies among African philosophers. But the debate on the existence of witches is one issue which African philosophers must take very seriously because of the damage the phenomenon is doing to African civilization. The time has come, therefore, for African philosophers and other scholars to engage themselves in rational enquiries into the belief in witchcraft and expose it for what it is: a baseless and superstitions belief.<sup>61</sup>

We do agree with Maduagwu that the issue of witchcraft has not really attracted serious philosophical attention especially among Africa philosophers as he rightly noted but we will equally add without reservation that he was rather too quick in his conclusion of witchcraft as baseless and superstitions. In as much as the assertions and explanations of those who uphold witchcraft and all it entails a reality has failed the observational or correspondence test as they keep saying "we know it is real because

there are numerable occurrences that prove its practical efficacy. We experience it, and it is ever present with us, working in our presence,"<sup>62</sup> but without presenting facts with respect to the model of sense perception. This however, does not necessarily make their claims baseless or witchcraft be considered as an illusion. As a matter of imperative, any genuine investigator on witchcraft in African context must be one with open mind and is willing to bracket every element of prejudice while "he search for meanings of cultural idioms for expressing the experiences of victims on this issue. To impose alien meanings on this phenomenon is to distort facts and vitiate truths."<sup>63</sup>

Again, one must also understand that most judgments about phenomenon such as witchcraft is essentially premised on peoples' worldview. Therefore, any attempt to interpret or explain the reality of witchcraft outside the African worldview will amount to erroneous judgments and conclusions due to inadequate application of interpretative paradigm. Emphasis must be made also that since there are levels or forms of reality, if the African concept or belief in witchcraft does not satisfy the requirements for scientific or other empirical methods or principles verifiability; it therefore presupposes that their idea of reality as regards witchcraft and other occult phenomena transcends empirical observation and verification. So, by implication, witchcraft is not just real but very possible. And to comprehend this reality clearly, one is required to be abreast with the general description of African worldview; since witchcraft cannot be properly understood outside the African way of perception of reality. Somewhere else we attempted an elaborate demonstration of Igbo world view which stands equally as a typical picture of African worldview and we did show that:

African views the world as an intricate co-penetrating and highly structured two realities - the visible and invisible. The visible sphere consists of whatever can be perceived with human five senses in the heavens and earth. The invisible is the sphere of the ultimate reality - God, the deities divinities, ancestors, innumerable spirits - good and evil ones. These two spheres of realities are hierarchically structured with the ultimate reality at the helm of affairs, while human beings are at the centre, beneficiaries, priests but never absolute controller of the two realities. Rather the invisible sphere dictate the pace, regulates and influences what happens at the visible sphere. It is therefore a spirit filled world at the visible reality; a world where all activities are interpreted in terms of the intricate interactions of these realities.<sup>64</sup>

The point therefore, is that the African world in which both the temporal and spiritual or the sacred and secular are but one single unity as both realities impinge on each other without restriction; though, the spirit remains the animating principle and would always influence the physical perhaps for its richment or diminishment; enhancement or destruction. Hence, the principle or the idea of cause and effect is an internalized ideology but the causative factor must not be interpreted outside the circumference of

African worldview. By implication, realities are perceived and explained using the physical and religious prism rather than strict philosophical syllogism or accurate scientific observations as most skeptics would tend to do considering their scientific minds and western orientation. So, the African man therefore is a religious being and his claim about witchcraft is anchored on his belief in the spirits, and realities or effects due to spirits obviously defy every scientific tenaciousity or expedition. No wonder after their research on witchcraft, both Mbiti and Parrinder with the host of her can authors termed witchcraft a mystical power but a living and active force though, may not be tangible and scientifically provable but real. To buttress this further Ekwunife emphasizes that:

... The African world in which witchcraft beliefs and practices thrive even today is essentially a religious world view where the metaphysical, mysterious and invisible realities which are believed to guide operations in the visible world of human experiences defy accurate observations, reflections with logical inferences and deletions. This observation should be bore in mind when viewing this occult phenomenon in African context. Interpreters of this issue in African context should also recall that two apparent opposed interpretative frame works have guided most world enquiries - purely scientific frame work and purely religious framework. While the former is dependent on accurate observation, measurement and conclusions backed by pure reasoning, the other starts with faith in metaphysical realities backed by religious experiences and expressions. The philosophy behind religious faith and reason is often clumsy and defies accurate rational explanations since it is partly dependent on the symbolic and partly on the nature of metaphysical non-tangible realities.<sup>65</sup>

In a further development, after studying the ontology of witchcraft, Dukor offers a more ontological and epistemological explanation to its reality in which he contends that, to any degree in which the reality of God is provable irrespective of the indices or paradigm of judgment, witchcraft shares the same privilege. Thus, witchcraft is a reality explainable by African models of interpretation of reality. He therefore, notes in his elucidation that:

The practice of witchcraft in Africa is one of the elements of African reality. Unlike western conceptions of reality, which lay emphasis on physical matter, African reality goes beyond to include spiritual forces, which have significant relations with physical matter. With this concept of reality, witchcraft assumes a metaphysical function in African societies, which embodies the power of the African unconscious and exemplified fundamental elements of African unconscious and exemplified fundamental elements of African Pan-psychism and ontology of the external world or reality... African cosmology and belief in witchcraft is a good example of an aspect of African metaphysics. In African worldview the physical and spiritual existences merges and complement each

other. The physical is the outward expression of the spiritual. Though spirit is the element which animates any living thing and the only aspect of which endures while the physical exists temporarily the creator of all living things is God who lives simultaneously in a spiritual heaven and in all states of life manifestations... As such He operates in the highest realm that entails that the realm of witchcraft should be seen to pervade below His. Hence metaphysically speaking, the evidence for the existence of God is also evidence for the existence of witchcraft or witches. This is why the proof of witchcraft is not always for the scientific man but for the religious man or the African. The man who turns his attention away from God is more likely to turn his attention from witches and vice versa ... Ontologically or epistemologically, witchcraft, for the religious man or the African, is real. It is a phenomenon, to borrow Kantian terminology, but perhaps it is also noumena, thing-in-itself because it has ontological existence. It is a thing one can say has a dual existence or manifestation - the scientific and non-scientific. The former is identified as the physical manifestation of witchcraft and the latter is its spiritual or ontological reality.<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, another important point that must be noted in this discourse is that the understanding of the phenomenon and reality of witchcraft is inextricably linked to the conception of man in African worldview, as a composite being of body and soul. The soul of man in the psychic world is again of two parts the one that animates the human frame, shape or structure and the ferocious bush soul. The bush soul can be transformed into anything or form such as cat, rat, spider, snake, dog etc. Thus, when a witch is on a given assignment or errand, whether good or evil he or she sends out the bush soul which has the capability of floating invisibly through the town till it gets to his/her destination; and immediately the deed he set out to do is accomplished, it returns home to reunite with the host body or owner. Hence because of this subjective ability, witchcraft is seen as a force that cannot act on its own without a known possessor. One may quickly ask how is this out of body journey possible? It is therefore most pertinent at this juncture to present a practical experience of those who are experts in such a spiritual or metaphysical exercise. Nnabuchi narrates a personal experience, thus:

For example, I moved to Scotland in 1976, I was living in 56 Dee Street, Aberdeen, Scotland. I was then studying Building Economics at Scott Sutherland School of Architecture, Robert Gordon University. Because of the antecedents of my Karma, I preferred a life of seclusion, only attending lectures and thereafter retiring to my room for studies. In March 1977, I began to write RICS exams. In the course of the exercise, I decided not to study beyond 12 midnight; I would slip into my bed and do some spiritual exercises and then sleep off. However, this fateful night, I was still awake and felt a subtle and tantalizing breeze not only within the room, but also within and around me, and it energized my entire system. I notice that I was slipping off the bed (rolling off the bed as if I was falling down). Behold I found myself

standing on the floor, looking at the other part of myself lying on the bed, comfortably sleeping. Immediately, I noticed a flying object, in the form of a flying saucer, approaching me. Walls and all the external envelope of the building ceased to exist. The flying object in the form of a flying saucer came and stood in front of me and a being in form of a man was standing on the saucer, with his face hidden from me. He asked me to walk into the object. This I did we took off to various parts of the world and at 6 am we returned to the room where my other self lay sleeping. I was, directed to disembark and enter my other self. Immediately, I got up from the bed.<sup>67</sup>

Naturally, he continues:

Because the entire experience looked like a continuous activity, I felt that the required rest did not exist. I was also not comfortable as this type of experience negated my mission in UK to read and obtain the necessary education and return to my country. The following day we repeated the journey, but my reservation increased. On the third day, the occupant of the flying object asked me whether these excursions were affecting my exams, I replied that all my exams went well and fine, but maintained it was a restless excursion. It had not dawned on me that the physical self who was involved in the exams was busy having sufficient rest. It had not dawned on me that I was in two different worlds simultaneously.<sup>68</sup>

The above experience shows effectively that everything about witchcraft is achieved with the body other than physical and in plain where one is not limited by space. It is the ability to operate at a certain level of consciousness through sleep or trance, though some witches are alleged to operate at this level consciously and can even attack their victims while they are awake and active; much of their activities will be given attention in the next section, what is important here is that witchcraft is a reality though, without any doubt, there are a lot of mystery surrounding its activities. We therefore end this section with Nabuchi's response to the skeptics of witchcraft as he speaks from the point of view of a spiritual authority, he forcefully emphasizes that witchcraft is a spiritual activity; any doubt to its reality obviously amounts to a conscious and deliberate deception of oneself and others. Thus, he enunciates:

Some people were quoted as saying that witchcraft does not exist. They claim that it exists in man's mind only. This statement is an unfortunate one indeed; although I concede to them that fear is a major factor in inducing situations which could erroneously be called witchcraft. These people are not better than those who claim that the supreme God does not exist, or those who state that *Alusi* is a stick that neither eats nor speak. Nor are they better than those who insist that their fathers and mothers were dafts. I am perfectly convinced that those who make such statements are not in any way serious about what they say. Their statements are directed towards people whom they wish to blindfold. They have all been victims of witchcraft and fully appreciate the

workings of the groups but prefer to keep humanity in ignorance. I have on very many occasions stated that on proper analysis, witchcraft is the use of spiritual powers to compel an event to occur. If you are against witches, they react in self defense and in that act, if you are affected, you are said to be bewitched. Similarly, if you are against the spiritual force responsible for Christianity it reacts, And if in the process you are affected, you are said to be bewitched. The same argument holds sway for any other religion. The practice of auto-suggestion is witchcraft. Hypnotism is as well an aspect of the same practice - witchcraft. On this basis what the blacks practice is not different from the whiteman's latest method of realizing the same goal. That our predecessors used herbs does not mean that we cannot apply the facilities of the mind to achieve the same goal. Auto-suggestion, hypnotism and the use of the mind generally serve the same purpose with witchcraft. They all revolve around the use of higher levels of spiritual awareness on the less fortunate ones. More than 50 percent of people living in this part of the world have become victims of witchcraft. I have on several occasions fallen into their net, but one force or another would pull me out of their grip. They have succeeded in giving me pains and discomfort at certain periods of life. Such trials, tests and pains increased my understanding of the power of witchcraft.<sup>69</sup>

Here a more critical question may thus be posed: what is the power of witchcraft and how does one recognize a witch; what are their possible features? The examination of our next section surely satisfies this quest.

### **ACTIVITIES AND CHARACTERIZATION OF WITCHCRAFT**

The general opinion is that activities of witches are anti-social. Little wonder that, it is being perceived as "mischievous and harmful to peaceful living and the progress of civilization. Many atrocities and horrible crimes are said to be committed by witches;"<sup>70</sup> they are notably, "diabolical and implacable enemies of the society."<sup>71</sup> Beliefs abound as to how one becomes a witch. Some uphold that a witch spirit can be inherited from a witch mother passing down the witchcraft to her daughter and fathers to their son.

In most cases, some are believed to be born witches, while others buy or acquire witchcraft intentionally by initiation. Instances have been given where witchcraft may be bought for a small sum or can be obtained from demons or the dead; others think that it is an infection that can be taken through food or anything edible. In some cultures it is believed that when daughter go into marriage among other things the most important parting gift they receive from their mothers is witchcraft which is considered necessary for protecting their marriage and family. It is argued that those who opt for witchcraft intentionally do that on the basis of survival in which witchcraft is seen as a spiritual vehicle for survival in the gullible world where life is considered to be a

struggle against 'the law of existence, tagged survival of the fittest'. Witches believed that all undertakings of man rest upon this concept and the only way for one to raise his head above the waters is to be strong enough as to contend with existing forces and never to be displaced. Nnabuchi remarks as he takes a look at the factors leading to membership of this all powerful and all fearful group. Thus:

This world according to majority of people inhabiting it is a warring world. In this theatre of war, everybody is striving and struggling to survive the war. In doing so, man has cause to resort to the strongest preparations, powers or gods. Such preparations, power or membership of occult or religious groups could lead one into membership of occult or religions or witchcraft. Similarly, people who have performed one form of public function or another, such as leading special dancing squad and or participation in a very strong masquerade, have become victims of those powers they had acquired to enable them ward off enemy attacks it is however, inhuman and reasonable to advise anyone against his wish to be strong enough to contain any evil plans by his co enemies. Our concern shall revolved around the question - to what extent shall one be strong? Depending on prevailing cultural values, one should strive to acquire just enough powers to prevent him from falling prey to his fellow beings. The degree of preparation considered adequate in one culture could be different in another situation. In areas where personal hatred is so rampant, the powers as preparations required for adequate protection may be considerate and this could lead to higher initiations into the system seen and called witchcraft.<sup>72</sup>

Apart from the above reasons, curiosity can make one acquire witchcraft or the desire to attain a higher level of spirituality, a kind of spiritual evolution. In this regard, witchcraft is simply regarded as a tool for security and defense in spiritual planes and as surely could be put to either positive or negative use. Mostly positive use for higher and matured witches who always see their position as a spiritual emancipation. Their operations are harmless and peaceful mostly in saving lives and being of service to the weak and defenseless. But at other times it can be quite deadly particularly when such powers intoxicate and the witch is overwhelmed with envy and bitterness, his only delights can only be of destruction. The philosophy that likes begets likes is at work here because the ingredients of initiation to witchcraft is a typical reflection of what one becomes after possessing of such powers. Therefore, it has been noted that:

Entry into witchcraft through herbs and other items of creation is a very delicate exercise indeed. The use as carnivorous animals, fishes and herbs entail membership into a club which delights not only in sucking human blood but also in performing all acts completely in accord with the behaviour pattern of the tools of preparation. This is the class of witches that exist in most parts of Nigeria. Progress in the level of witchcraft demands ruthlessness on the part of members. Killing of seven people earns the member an Ugo (eagle feather). Killing of additional seven persons entitles the witch to movement to another

stage of spirituality. This trend is continued until the witch becomes the leader of his group. Here emphasis is on the degree of recklessness in eliminating fellow human beings. The number of people killed, maimed, deformed or leadership and authority. The nature of deformity varies but includes such acts like impotency, infertility, lack of progress in human endeavour and complete destruction of one's source of income and livelihood.<sup>73</sup>

Again, the witches are said to operate at night. In their coven they meet in guilds with relays of admission and a code of conduct. The meetings are said to be a meeting of the spirit of witches. The spirit of the witch leaves her/his body in a particular kind of animal or bird or fire-ball to the place of meeting believed to be under or on top of trees. Trees like the big looks, Mahogany and some others that give good shades that are found within the village or often located at the outskirts of the village, are considered dangerous since they are sometimes, gathering point of some invisible forces. No wonder most trees are regarded as divine or abodes of gods or spirits as we have demonstrated in our discourse on the theory of forces. Such trees are seen as sanctuaries and are believed to be connected by its roots with the underworld hence, to the wisdom and fore-knowledge of the dead. The witches covens are not visible to an ordinary eye. One cannot normally see a witch going in and out of its coven nor can one see the coven, or where it is located. In the Western world where witchcraft is presented as an old religion, covens are visible and organized as a place of worship. The modern description of a coven by Western witches is a gathering or community of worship much like a congregation in Christian Parlance. It is composed of a group of believers who gather together for ceremonies of worship such as down the Moon or celebrating the Sabbaths. Therefore, places "... where covens are located in temples, halls and other public places like schools; trees in affinity with the functionality of witches are planted spiritually outside such buildings, and such plants later germinate physically to serve the required function,"<sup>74</sup> unlike the Western witches at where a specific number of witches make up a coven, the Igbo witches believe in numerical strength for carrying out their missions and for competition too. As such memberships depends on who initiates one into witchcraft, both interested and uninterested candidates are initiated in form of recruitment into their fraternity. Meetings are held most times on daily basis to deliberate on issues concerning members; it is at these meetings that victims are presented. There are different methods of attending the meetings as every initiate is given the power of transforming into different things (pending on the mission at hand) immediately after one's initiation. Consequently, "nocturnally birds like owl are believed to be transformation of witches or to be in a league with witches."<sup>75</sup> Offiong reports that: "Witches decide at their night time meetings who should bring the next meat; they have a right to reject what is offered and order better meat. Interviews as well as confessions made during the witch purge crusade state that in order to attend a meeting the soul of a witch escapes from the body and turns into familiar bird or

animal."<sup>76</sup> Apparently, vices are believed to have the power to inflict all kinds of material loss on people; the authors of accidents, tornadoes, falling trees and snake bites. In all African societies, almost every malevolent occurrence are attributed to witchcraft except otherwise stated, scholars have termed it an explanation of fortunate events. Quarcoopome emphasizes that:

The reality of witchcraft is evidenced in the belief that they are thought to be responsible for all kinds of misfortunes in the society - diseases, paralysis, barrenness, impotence, failure in life and even death. Illness is said to appear when the witches devour the spiritual body and suck its blood spiritually. This causes the mortal frame to weaken and pains and paralysis occur. When the heart is reached the victim dies.<sup>77</sup>

Parinder, equally concludes after reviewing a vast literature on African witchcraft that, "in modern times, lack of success, failure in examination, inability to gain promotion in office or shop, any strange disease, and especially barrenness in women and impotence in men, is attributed to witchcraft."<sup>78</sup> They are believed to have the ability to look into the seed of time and make predictions with the highest level of certainty, this quality enables a witch to read into people's future and destiny and make forecast that have occurred exactly, explicitly, and in many, many cases, word for word."<sup>79</sup> This they do mostly using the principle of thought, telepathy, and the matrix as the key to manifestation for advanced and high level witches. The same power and principle is said to be responsible even when they make their attacks through their familiars (they are messengers, spies and companions for life), witches carry the aura of sweetening but weakening wind and power that paralyzes their victims as soon as they are within their presence. Nnabuchi, elucidates their activities with respect to such a sophisticated techniques and ability in achieving their objectives. This he explains:

Majority of people feel that they are bewitched only in the dream state. While majority of witches operate under the cover, more advanced witches use other techniques to achieve the same result. The most common method is the use of magic wand to make the victim dizzy, weak and incapacitated so as to enable them have full and unhurried operation on the victim. When a medical doctor wants to operate a patient he first gives him anesthetics so that he cannot feel the pains of operation. The witches use a more articulate magical means to achieve the same result. In some cases a type of magic wand which induces sweet breeze on the victim is employed. Apart from the wind on itself being a sufficient means of sending a patient to sleep, this induced wind carries with it certain alchemical properties which temporarily paralyses the nerves and hence induces the required incapacitations to enable them feast on their victim as they require.<sup>80</sup>

He further stated with clarity that:

Some more advanced witches can devour their victim even when they are driving, eating or playing, without the victim having the slightest feeling or recollection of what is taking place in him. Alternatively, such witches could mount road blocks and whoever passes through any of such points will not live to pass another road block. The techniques they employ in achieving their goals are varied and complex, but revolve around the use of higher spiritual powers to manipulate their victims. Certain sections of Igbo land refer to this class of witches as *oke amagba*.<sup>81</sup>

In most places, it is believed that witches attack not just their enemies but friends and relatives. The reasons perhaps, being high level of selfishness and consciencelessness. A witch cannot be charitable and even when she does, is believed to be motivated by selfish reasons, either to harm or to initiate one outside his knowledge. They can always do anything to anybody without qualms of conscience. Arazu agrees to fact that "the witch has no conscience because almost everything connected with witchcraft takes place in the astral plane which is almost intangible and beyond empirical verification; witches hide under the cover darkness."<sup>82</sup> And that is why one's goodness to a witch on the basis of familiarity or friendship can be used against him as this opens way or breaks the barrier of defense making him a prey to the witch. Experts explain such witch attitude in this manner, thus:

If you feed somebody physically, or manifest love in your dealings with him, he will certainly abuse it. Such acts are invitations to deal with you. The love you have shown to him emboldens him to come back in the night in full spiritual clothing to continue to extract your generosity. Because he is your friend, his appearance will not be repulsive to your spiritual counterpart and armed with spiritual magnetism which paralyses you to submission, you become indefensible and consequently at his mercy. Such nightly visit would further weaken your line of defence until you die.<sup>83</sup>

However, modern witchcraft characterized with ten principal elements regarded as the paths to fulfillment which are: "Trance, Meditation, and rites and Spells; flagellation binding with Cords; Music, Dance and Wine; The Great Rite (the sexual act) and Nudity."<sup>84</sup> The general conception of the initiates is that witchcraft is predicated on these elements and they determine actions and inactions of a witch, his every choice and avoidance. Most naturalist have been argued be witches because their attachment to nature and nudity; witches as a matter emphasis always feels better off with nakedness not only in their covens during meetings and rituals but in their personal lives. Janet and Steward Farrar in these following lines states reasons for being naked mostly for spiritual ceremonies:

- a) That polarity exists as a dictate of culture, which sees hiding the body a spiritually virtuous act. If culture recycles itself, as it often does, sky clad can become an

acceptable norm. They assert that it is easier to raise psychic power with an uncovered body than covered one.

- b) That pheromones, external chemical messengers function better when body is naked. According scientists, a molecule female with seven rides way when the body exposed, chemical messengers uninhibited.
- c) That workings sky milestones on road self-realization
- d) That nudity is an expression of the principles of democracy freedom of choice
- e) That nakedness brings to the fore the statement that psychic effectiveness comes from within.<sup>85</sup>

This very feature nudity or nakedness is equally noticed the life of most medicine men witch doctors in their nocturnal activities. It is common in villages to see a women mostly but sometimes man stark naked at the dead of night in his or her compound; road sides or at the centre of four road paths; at the river or shrine and occasionally, towards an evil forest or town boundaries performing one ritual or the de other sacrifice or incantations. Nudity or nakedness is a known attribute of witches, spiritualists, occultists, adepts and sages. This is because perhaps, ritual nakedness and prophecy is a practice that is seen in very culture; besides, it is an old pagan practice. But most significantly, it symbolizes a certain kind of power and extremism that is always manifested in matters or situations considered to require a force other than physical strength. It has a magical power over the forces of nature and to man himself, it is the nonverbal language of the spirits and the higher beings that pierces the veil of the unknown, breaks every silence and doors even the very gate of the underworld. In Igbo traditional religion for instance:

The Igbo native doctors (witch doctor) are required to go naked to the shrine of their ancestor with *Oji* and *egede*, beat *egede* and songs of lamentation or praises while making invocations and incantations as a means of building a strong spiritual base. *Oji* is a metal staff, with arms in form of gongs, which, when the pointed end hits the ground, makes a type of noise, which attracts spirits of the dead ancestors who were carriers of the ancient spiritual instrumentation of the family or lineage. *Egede* is a double barrel wooden drum, which the native doctor beats as he sings and calls on his predecessors who had handled the mantle of spiritual authority of the lineage.<sup>86</sup>

It can be argued that on the basis the much already stated potentials and characteristics of a witch, that witches are best described as very unusual, well reserved, fearless spiritual and tenacious people notable for their excessive individualism. They are equally known for their total abstinence from most common things or food that ordinarily are enjoyed by many such as meat, fish, oil, cocoyam and bitter cola (Garciniakola) among others. No wonder most witches are total vegetarians. It is believed that by avoiding these things, one conserves spiritual energy; but the speculation is that those things are part of the items of creation used during initiation

and by partaking in them consciously or unconsciously, it affects the witch's spiritual powers. It is necessary to mention that there are some individuals who are witches without knowing they are, while in most cases well known witches can use another person's appearance or image in attacking their victims as a cover after which an innocent person would be accused. There are other instances in which a witch loses the control of her powers, 'the functionality of her spiritual outings and action and in such situation the witch acts aimlessly and dangerously. Nnabuchi, articulates these factors as possible reasons responsible for such situations of helplessness and ruthlessness in the lives of these individuals with such a spiritual awakening, awareness and authority. He therefore states as follows:

- [1] If in power generation, necessary ingredients, which could have acted as a blending and harmonizing force, were, left out, the person is in great difficulty. The individuals' psychic self, which ought to accommodate and control the power, assigned to it, loses grip of that power, which on its own hops in and out of the body at will, and executes acts detrimental to the identity of the personality concerned.
- [2] If a very strong spirit is, assigned to the psychic self by a dibia, and the individual breaks the terms of engagement after reaping the benefit of the works of the colonizing entity, then the individual psychic self will be relegated to the background, while the colonizing power goes around satisfying itself.
- [3] If the individual has committed an unpardonable act, which negates the essential character of the noble and ancient group to which he once belonged and was stripped of attached privileges and rights, he would be reduced to a very low level of witchcraft such as vampirism and the likes.
- (4) When physical and psychic selves are working cross purposes, in whichever case, one supreme, and that is that the psychic self of accused which had lost that gift attached to the membership of his order. He has become a lone ranger, is being treated as a stranger, and therefore must fight his war alone.<sup>87</sup>

Above all, scholars and authorities such Ekwunife has argued the general characteristics of witches are simply their tendency consciously, mysteriously and maliciously unleash evil against the society for selfish ends. He however posits that witches are categorized as potential reasons such as ignorance of modern scientific approach to life, African fetish beliefs or psychological fear of affairs disgruntled old women, the poor of society etc., is not enough to stand as tangible attributes or features of witchcraft. This is because as he contends, real witches are found in all spheres of African life and status, ancient and modern, African kings and all categories of social groups, academicians, politicians, church dignitaries, students, illiterates of any society and elite at times use strange African occult science to achieve their selfish ends. He therefore summaries from the African perspective the general features of witchcraft in these well-articulated lines. Thus:

- a) It is endemic belief of Africans from time immemorial.
- b) It rooted in mysterious element of African traditional religious culture.
- c) It is of its nature occultic, secret, mysterious and therefore transcends accurate physical scientific observation.
- d) Purveyors of the African occultic science form secret guilds and operate mostly at nights on top gigantic trees like iroko or Akpu tree (cotton tree)
- e) They hold their covens with their ethereal bodies where they suck the ethereal bloods of their victims and wreck destructions on targeted victims, places and natural objects.
- f) Malicious silence is the avowed code of members plus co-operation in evil activities.<sup>88</sup>

Let's therefore examine witchcraft more closely from the Igbo conception.

### **WITCHCRAFT AMONG THE IGBO**

The Igbo people of Nigeria like in other African cultures believe in witchcraft. Interactions with both the ones at home and in diaspora reflect their strong belief in these mystical activities which they speak about with much certainty. Prominently in Igbo cosmology, witchcraft phenomenon explains every mishap; economic, political, social and physical. It is considered as a serious threat to the entire community. They believe witches are human with some kind of mysterious or extraordinary power with which they do harm to their fellow human beings. They have it that witchcraft is nothing but evil and the act of inflicting pain and causing havoc to the community with unaccountable number of deaths of both children and adults alike. The witchcraft belief among the Igbo certifies E.A John's assertion when he says that:

The influence of witchcraft in any given society where its belief is widespread cannot be underestimated nor overemphasized. It is said to be a living social force, a force that negatively has torn asunder the fabrics of unity in several villages, communities, generations, families, friends etc. Among the negative influence is fear and suspicion, which blurs one from the true sense of judgement. People begin to accuse each other whenever they suffer from mishap or misfortune, thus blaming it on friends, relatives or even family members whom they assume are witches.<sup>89</sup>

The Igbo word for witchcraft is *Amosu* though, sometimes used to refer to someone who is very wicked, anti-social or asocial person; or people with abnormal behaviour, strange character or a sadist; it can as well be referred as diabolic person who is into some kind of occultism. Equally, someone who is very intelligent with disposition of all knowing or so good in a particular discipline, or even some kind of prediction, such individuals are as well being referred to as *Amosu* (witch). But more general use of the term refers to someone the community suspects of practicing witchcraft, a person who has been identified by traditional doctors, spiritualists or fellow witches as a witch. Witches are always characterized by some kind of behaviours that sometimes make people to suspect them of being a witch. Accordingly, the Igbo define witchcraft as a

mystical or supernatural power causes harm and all kinds of evil including death. This power is purely psychic and those who possess this kind of power are believed to inflict any kind of disease on someone and gradually drains the blood of the person to death. They can as well cast a spell on one's progress or business or on a beautiful lady that she will not marry irrespectively of her qualifications and elegance. In the language of the natives they hold it that:

One under the spell of witches experiences confusion, the inability to complete tasks begun, being disliked, being hated for no reason, and unwarranted rejection. His or her presence stirs up strife and quarrels even without speaking. There is lack of sexual desire for one's spouse, and in some cases, a strong urge to run away from one's spouse; inability to account for one's income, strong urge to purchase unnecessary products, and total breakdown of things, e.g. one's car breaks down endlessly, so that money is spent repairing the car until there is great frustration. There is also a breakdown in communication between spouses, bosses and colleagues so that, whatever the spell says, is used against him or her, even when he or she tries to counsel others. Also seen, is a breakdown in relationships, so that the sight of wife irritates husband for no reason, her presence, her food, dress, make-up, her laughter; everything about the wife becomes irritable, yet the husband cannot explain why and vice versa. A once favoured worker now becomes a pariah before his colleagues, and is faced with isolation and his gesture for friendship meets with hostility. People laugh at him and make joke about spelled behind his back for no reason, and sometimes in his presence, too, and those who used to respect him suddenly lose respect for him. Yet, if the victim tells people his experiences no one believes him. 'It's your perception', they would say, because those reacting to him negatively do not even understand their reaction and, even when made aware, cannot explain why they react so negatively.<sup>90</sup>

The belief about how one becomes a witch is not different from the rest of other African communities; mostly that the witch spirit can be inherited with a witch mother passing down the witchcraft to her daughter not by inheritance per se, but initiating through any means that pleases her even without the knowledge of daughter. It is also believed that one acquire witchcraft intentionally through getting herself initiated by taking the witch substance. But children are mostly initiated through gifts and edibles. In view of "children hardly receive edible items or gifts from anybody outside his or immediate (nuclear) family circle, because of fear of being infected with witchcraft."<sup>91</sup> By implication witchcraft affects individual's social interaction with fellow human being in such a society where there is a predominant belief in witchcraft such as Igbo. It is equally believed that:

... The father, mother, or any elderly person could initiate the child by conjuring the child's spirit or soul during the nocturnal meeting into any living object around such as, bat, vulture, rat, cat, etc, and would then administer the

witchcraft through the form of food, which would be eaten in the coven. Immediately this is done, he or she sends the soul of the child back into its body... a person may be uninitiated in a public or communal gathering. And this is done through the process of serving witchcraft infested meat and palm wine, for they would be initiated to eat and drink. Hence, immediately one dips his or her hand into the same plate of palm oil and eats therein, he or she automatically becomes a witch... Also a person can be initiated by willingly consenting to being a witch, by approaching a renounced herbalist who necessarily must be a witch. After all the necessary sacrificial rituals have been done, he administers the concoction on the person, who automatically becomes a witch.... Some people can be initiated in their dreams by loved ones either alive or dead, by transporting the person, to be initiated into their coven and offers him or her 'night' meat, immediately the person accepts this offer, he or she automatically becomes a witch. In the end it all appears to be a dream but when the calling drum is sounded for witches to meet, he or she would respond with immediate effect.<sup>92</sup>

Again, just like the Ibibio, Azende and Nupe of Bida in northern Nigeria, the Igbo believe that witches are mostly women; and every witch has a witch substance (physical substance) existing in his or her body that allows the soul to engage in errands to harm their fellow human beings and their property in varied ways. The belief is that one is not possessed by any spirit or thing but witchcraft is a deliberate act in which with the help of the witch substance the individual can leave his/her body and move to place spiritually or magically doing some harm. In analysis of witchcraft, Arazu describes some of such activities in relation to the witch substance. Thus he emphatically enunciates that:

There is no amount of exorcism that can drive out witchcraft because he or she is not possessed by any spirit or thing. In the case of witchcraft, there is something that the person has taken through the month and that thing is the witch substance. With the help of this substance they can engage in extrasensory activities. At the appropriate time in the night the person goes out especially through the top of the head - a case of astral travels. This is where a person goes into dream consciously and by working with the astral body (not the physical body) is able to accomplish a lot of feats. Within the astral body is the life principle. What the witch sucks is not the physical blood but the ectoplasm of the blood. The ectoplasm is the magnetic life energy of the blood, it is this energy field that the witch or wizard sucks to recharge his or her own battery (ie energy field). While he or she is charging his or her own life-force, the other person is dying.<sup>93</sup>

Whatever the witch substance is, it is believed to be something physical and like the Nyakyusa, the Igbo have it to be in the stomach; it can only be removed by a renowned traditional doctor [witch doctor] or spiritualists who can use supernatural powers to

locate its position in the stomach and bring it out, or perhaps administer to the said witch "something that can destroy it"<sup>94</sup> without harming him or her in the process. The power of the witch substance includes the ability of the witch to change her form into other beings. The Igbo are no exception when Wilson in her research on Nyakyusa witchcraft notes that:

Certain people have python (*isota*) in their bellies which give them power to harm men and cattle, by throttling, tramping, wondering, and kicking them. These are the witches (*abalosi*). They are said to fly by night on their pythons, or 'in the wind', either singly or in covens, to attack a chosen victim, and to leave on their beds their skins, which can feel nothing'. So closely are the witch and his pythons identified that if a python is killed the witch will die.<sup>95</sup>

Witchcraft is believed to be an organized group and in their coven, members are hierarchically arranged and are being addressed with a special name other than their real or common name in the physical world. They are united and bonded by the oath of secrecy; mostly taken on the day of one's initiation. A typical ample of such oath is as follows:

I, (name), in this place which is not a place, and in this time which is not a time, do give my most solemn and sacred oath that I will abide by my chosen path and will fulfill the dance of my destiny without complaint, knowing it to be the way of that which I call my goddess and that which I call my god! I shall keep silent all thing entrusted to me by the gods and by those who seek silence of me, in the true nature of priestess (preset)! I hereby take upon myself the life of witch and tell all that gather here that my name is (name)"<sup>96</sup>

Another version says: "... in the presence of the mighty ones do I out of my own free will and accord most solemnly swear that I will never reveal the secret of the art except it be to a proper person, properly prepared, with a circle such as this. And that I would never deny the secret of the art... and my magical weapons turn against me if I break this solemn oath."<sup>97</sup> The phenomenon of witchcraft among the Igbo is versed and complicated but they do believe that it can be prevented through charms, amulets, magical concoctions and preparations or devices planted within the work place, one's car and home or compound and Christians also believed that with the help of Psalms and Sacramentals, they can avert witchcraft and their evil machinations. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that while a lot of emphasis is placed in the negative effect of witchcraft, the Igbo have a typology that categorizes witchcraft from the perspective of function and social acceptance. The power of witchcraft in most instances can be a welcomed idea especially when it involves the type of witchcraft the Igbo describes as *Amosu Nche - Uke/Ulo* (Guardian or protective witch). Those who practice this kind of witchcraft mostly use it in protecting whatever that is theirs from being taken by anybody, or be intimidated for any reason; it offers them some kind of absolute security

against unwarranted aggression from their enemies. In this case such individual with *Amosu nche-ulo* attacks whoever that trespasses their territory with any evil intentions such as displacing them from their land (or any valuable property) or one's husband or wife. *Amuso nche ulo* fights or attacks only in defence but not to injure others out of jealousy, wickedness and greed like in the case of another form commonly known as *Amosu Ogboma* (vampire witch). The latter is deadly and greatly dreaded by the community; that is the witchcraft that is utterly condemned as anti-social and evil. However, it does not necessarily mean that either of these forms of witchcraft cannot be employed for good or evil as the witch pleases, they can, but *Amosu nche-ulo* is essentially for defence of ones right and possessions. There are other forms of witchcraft apart from the already mentioned two; others include: *Amosu Oha*, *Amosu Nka*, *Amosu Mmiri*, *Amosu Enu-ala*, *Amosu Ikpo Nsi* and *Amosu Ukawo*.

Worthy of note is that the above arrangement is not explicitly a conscious generally made classification among the Igbo, what is more commonly known to the people is *Amosu Ogboma* which seems to overshadow every other conception of witchcraft. One can only get such details from well informed elders who are culture-conscious and are far from being bias about what is obtainable among his people, or from medicine men [witch doctors] that choose to disclose such detailed information for the sake of knowledge to those seeking to know or trainees but never to the general public. Hence, even the little child in a typical Igbo community will tell about witchcraft generally but may not be well informed about such classifications. We must not forget to mention that there is no material on witchcraft that one cannot find either confessions of witches or testimonies/cases on witchcraft activities, our interest is not to replicate such stories as a good number of them were gathered from our field work which lack of space and time would not allow us to include here. Often times, witchcraft activities and manifestations are difficult to differentiate from effects due to other spiritual practices or magical powers.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this discourse, it has been elaborately established that the idea and reality of witchcraft has a long history manifesting and permeating every culture across the globe. While the phenomenon is widely denied as non-existent by some 'believers', available evidence and testimonials have sufficiently proven that witchcraft is never a mere myth but a reality. For some scholars, witchcraft is non-existent because it defies scientific observation and verification. However, none of the above suffices to negate the reality of witchcraft. It is rather the case that the spiritual nature of witchcraft and the nocturnal nature of their activities immensely contribute to the difficulty in understanding and appreciating its existence. Also, against the belief that everything about witchcraft is devilish, there are good witches whose actions or activities are for the human good. For

example, some witches protect not only themselves but also their loved ones against the attacks of their enemies. It indeed suffices to say that witchcraft is as real as we can conceive ourselves to be, and, some witches are beneficial as well as harmful to the members of the society. Finally, it is recommended for the phenomenon of witchcraft to be properly understood and appreciated any fruitful discourse in this regard must put into consideration the African perception of cause and effect. Witchcraft must not be judged, using the Western paradigm, every analysis of this phenomenon must recognize the African perception of reality. This is because it is totally out of place to view an African reality from the Western perceptive.

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