

MYSTICAL POWERS OF WITCHCRAFT AMONG THE GBAGYIS

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Abstract

This essay examines specific elements that persistently under gird the survival of Gbagyi Knunu even after the Gbagyi people in Nigeria have been introduced to monotheistic religions such as Islam and Christianity for over two centuries. It interacts with some select writings of a few European and African ethnographers who have studied primal worldviews, using their insights to better understand Gbagyi Knunu. This essay thus seeks to find out how the Gbagyi people have been responding to Christianity and Islam and why they still resort to the practice of their Knunu, with particular reference to witchcraft.

Introduction

The Gbagyis are an ethnic group living in Central Nigeria. Currently, they are about 5,000,000 people. Earlier they were known either as *Gwaris* or as *Gbaris* “*Matayis*” or “*Ymmas*.”¹ No in-depth scholarly work has been written about them in general and their *Knunu* (“tradition, worldview, customs, beliefs, and way of life”) in particular. This essay seeks to fill in the gap in the academic knowledge of the Gbagyis. In a comparative approach it draws insights from relevant source materials about other ethnic groups in Africa whose ways of thinking and living closely resembles that of the Gbagyis. It lays special emphasis on

the beliefs and practices of various forms of witchcraft among the Gbagyi people. These include *agunzheyin* (“witchcraft”), *ashigbe* (“medicine”), and *zoku* (“divination”). These three concepts have the inherent meanings of good and evil. This essay, however, highlights more of their negative influence.

Witchcraft: Reality, Theory and Interpretation

Henry Jay Watkin in defining witchcraft draws from the Eurocentric conception it represents. He says the word “witch” comes from the English noun “Wicca” which means, “to cast spell.” He therefore defined it as “a web of beliefs and practices whose purpose is to manipulate nature for the benefit of the witch or the witch’s client.”² *The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary* sees it as “the practice of witch or witches especially the use of magic or sorcery: the exercise of supernatural power supposed to be possessed by a person in league with devil or evil spirits.”³ While the first definition agrees mostly with the concept of witchcraft in Gbagyi land which generally has to do with ‘the witches’ being able to influence supernatural powers to their advantage, the second contains more of Christian biases. Indeed, to the Gbagyi witchcraft can be used either positively or negatively. The Gbagyis do not see the spirit behind witchcraft as inherently wicked or evil. The enterprise to which the ‘witch’ puts the supernatural powers determines how witchcraft qualified as good or bad.

Looking at the various theories on witchcraft developed by scholars, three theories provide helpful insights to understand Gbagyi witchcraft more fully. Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard (1902–1973) was one of the early scholars who studied the role of witchcraft among the Azande in Central Africa. He opines that witchcraft was a method adapted to control the social behaviour of a people.⁴ Secondly, E. Bolaji Idowu, a Yoruba scholar of African Traditional Religion, brings out the harmful effects of witchcraft. He explains that witches can send out “the spirit of living human beings” in “body, mind, or estate.”⁵ Thirdly, Barry Hallen and J. Olubi Sodipo who have studied the practices of witchcraft among the Yoruba have noted that witches come from the lower strata of the society in general, and from economically poor background in particular. Both scholars have also found out that people become witches for socio-economic reasons: they do not wish to succumb to “resignation and self-pity,”⁶ but ensure their survival by protecting their socio-economic interests.

In other parts of Africa the concept of witchcraft tend to be the same with the Gbagyi people; Ter Haar, who has studied the beliefs associated with Ghanaian witchcraft practices, state that evil spirits associated with witchcraft “come from outside to torment people.”⁷ It is evident that the Gbagyi’s understanding of witchcraft consists not only of good forces, but also of the evil ones. They believe that good can come out of evil as well. People have both the good and evil tendencies. Deities can make use of human beings either to achieve good things or to harm others. J. O. Kayode affirms that “these human officials (priests or priestesses) are used as intermediaries because man always finds the sacred mysterious.”⁸ It must be noted here that the deities in themselves are not regarded as witches or wizards but the outcome of their activities. Happenings that impact negatively on the people are attributed to witches and wizards especially when no natural explanations can be readily offered. For example, sudden death of a promising young a boy or girl in a community is naturally attributed to witchcraft activities in Gbagyi community, and in any African community, because death and calamities most times defy any natural explanation. Witches and wizards are, therefore, blamed most of the time for such calamities.

Witchcraft is not only perceived as a negative phenomenon by the Gbagyi people, they serve some positive and useful purposes in their society. The continuing existence of witchcraft fulfils several utilitarian purposes. According to Umar Habila Dadem Danfulani, who has examined the worldviews of Mupun in Nigeria, people conceive the mystical forces of witchcraft “according to their utility,”⁹ particularly in critical situations. Paul G. Hiebert and his colleagues have spelled out the utilitarian purposes of witchcraft. Accordingly the Gbagyi people like any other primal people, hold the idea that, witchcraft is “used to make rain, ripen the harvest, procure peace, protect family members from attack and ensure victory in battle.”¹⁰

The selfish and the greedy were treated like wizards, or witches (Guzyenyi)¹¹, no one wants to have close association with them in the community in Gbagyi land because, in an ideal situation, nobody was allowed to accumulate more than others. Chief Enock B. Jarumi, a Gbagyi writer, has identified other factors such as “fear, suspicion, jealousies, and ignorance”¹² as aiding the continual existence and practice of witchcraft in Gbagyi land. If a new religion fails to provide utilitarian means of facing critical challenges, people choose to resort to certain aspects of their ancient ancestral faiths. Harriet Hill’s study of the

Adioukrou people of Cote D'Ivoire gives a fitting example. He notes that, many people in Cote D'Ivoire became Christians and openly burnt their fetishes hoping that they got rid of all mystical powers in their lives. Seventy years later, they found themselves practising witchcraft because, in their opinion, Christianity did not solve their everyday problems and fears associated with the spirit beings, ambiguities and uncertainties of life.¹³ That applies to the Gbagyis in the findings of this study.

Witches or wizards in the Gbagyi cosmology refer to person(s) who, through supernatural means, are able cause harm or death to individuals or a community. They also have the capacity to help and defend the people and community at large using the same supernatural means.

Gbagyi Religious contact with Islam.

Islam first came to Gbagyi land in the 19th century, during the Sokoto Jihad of 1804 led by Usman Danfodio. Christianity on the other hand came in the 20th century through the southerners.

Harold D. Gunn and F. P. Conant, in their study of the people of the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, have stated how in 1804 Sarkin Zauzau, the Muslim ruler of Zaria, took a few Gbagyi slaves to Abuja and how subsequently Islam began to take hold of the Gbagyi people.¹⁴ Islam was able to gain more converts than Christianity. The reason for this was because practices like polygamy, divination and the using of rings and amulet were part of the religion, and the fact that Gbagyi religion also encouraged the use of such, many of them received the religion whole heartedly.

Gbagyi Religion encounters Christianity

Gbagyi people came in contact with three large categories of Christians: Protestant missionaries, British colonial administrators who claimed to be Christians, and Roman Catholic Christians. Charles Lindsay Temple, an ethnographer in the service of the British Colonial Government in Nigeria states that Protestant Christianity came to Gbagyi land with the arrival of the missionaries of the *Sudan Interior Mission* (SIM) in 1904. The following year, other missionaries belonging to the *Church Missionary Society* (CMS, 1905) followed them. British colonial administrators introduced new legal, educational, and political policies that failed to address issues related to Gbagyi witchcraft and witchcraft-related crimes. S.F. Nadel, who studied the Nupe, describes a common

African perception of the Europeans with regard to the persisting nature of witchcraft in Africa: “White Man did not believe in witchcraft”¹⁵ The British administrators, mostly under the spell of European Enlightenment, could not understand the centrality of witchcraft among the Gbagyis and failed to take it seriously. Therefore, the Gbagyis developed their own ways of addressing their social problems; but they got into moral crisis originating from their loyalty to their ancestral traditions pertaining to witchcraft and their need to conform to British legal system.¹⁶ The second group of Christians with whom the Gbagyis came into contact with were the Roman Catholic missionaries of the *Society of African Mission* (SMA, founded in 1856) who reached Gbagyi land in 1913.¹⁷

According to the Catholic Diocese of Minna, Nigeria, the work in Gbagyi land began as an outstation of Lokoja while, her history states that it was administered from Asaba by the Vicar Apostle. The first missionary to plant a Catholic Church in Gbagyi land was Rev. Fr. Leon De Bourge.¹⁸ Largely, the membership was drawn from immigrant rail workers from the South East who made the parish grow. Furthermore, the Catholic work among the Gbagyis was precipitated strongly on the use of Western education and health facilities. On the other hand, the first SIM/ECWA missionaries to Gbagyi land were Dr. Andrew P. Stirrett and Rev E. F. Rice who came to Wushishi in 1904 to begin the work in the Northern Nigeria.¹⁹ The work progressed in the following order: Paiko (1909) by Rev E. F. Rice and Rev. George; Karu (1910) by Rev George Sanderson and Rev. Charles Dudley; Minna (1913) by Rev. James F. Cotton while Kuta (1919) was by Rev. John Hay and Rev. E. F. Rice.²⁰

The long histories of Islam and Christianity did not completely replace the old loyalties of the Gbagyi people to their Traditional Religion. In certain situations, all Gbagyi people, whether Christians or Muslims, practice their *Knunu*. They claim that *Knunu* safeguards them, their families, societies, and activities from certain evil forces and uncertainties of the future. Thus, the Gbagyi Muslims and Christians live with an unresolved dichotomy between Christianity and Islam and between traditional religion. Even after two centuries of Gbagyi’s encounters with Islam and Christianity, belief in witchcraft still thrives.

Witchcraft among the Gbagyis

Gbagyis are a primal people and just as any other primal people, they are afraid of the influence of evil spirits. They believe that every injury, whether caused by natural disaster or human negligence, is the

work of human enemies who have used witchcraft for harmful purposes.²¹ The determination of the Gbagyi people to overcome fear invariably forces them to acquire mysterious powers with which they hope to control and order fellow human beings, other forces and events.

Many Gbagyis believe and practice Islam and Christianity along with certain aspects of their primal religion known as *Knunu*. Basically, the religion consists of a “personal god, or guardian spirit, whose shrine is in a special tree in the *kurmi*, where offerings of fowl and beer are made”²² It is worth noting that the Gbagyis consider the natural objects – both living and non-living – as endowed with the power and presence of either beneficent or malevolent spirits. The Gbagyis often consult *Knunu* functionaries who are considered to be endowed with special mystical powers. These functionaries include the *Zokuda* (“diviners”) and the local *Ashigbeda* (“medicine women/men”). These people possess supernatural powers to negatively influence and harm others who they perceive as their enemies. They use witchcraft as a powerful means to accomplish their purpose. They often send out their *zafun* (“soul”) to attack people mostly in their sleep and cause illnesses and mental torture through dreams. The harmful power of the *Agunzheyin* is not limited to external manipulations alone. They can cause people to think evil thoughts and to engage in harmful practices.

These *Zokudas* and the *Ashigbedas* hail from all social strata; they are neither limited to the lower strata of the society nor to an economically deprived group. Two dominant reasons seem to draw them to the mastery of witchcraft: taking a revenge on others who are (rightly or wrongly) perceived to be enemies and assuming social power for control. The power of these *Zokudas* and the *Ashigbedas* cannot be underestimated. Their activities influence the socio-economic development of entire communities. They fulfil a function that neither the British laws nor the Christian or Muslim way of life could effectively meet nor understand. They showed the Gbagyis the ways and means of redressing people’s grievances and sufferings aggravated not only by envy, hatred, and by the urge for revenge, but also by “failure, misfortune, and above all sickness and death.”²³

Jarumi also explains that the Gbagyis are afraid of the harmful mystical powers and their human functionaries such as the *Agunzhenyin*. Due to fear of the evil witches, they do not leave behind their “hairs, finger and toe nails, clothes or other articles” which the *Agunzhenyin* might get hold of and use to harm the owner. There are many types of

Gbagyi witchcraft; all of them are inseparably associated with the *Zakoyi* (“ancestor veneration”).²⁴ *Adawyiya* (“ancestral cult”) is part of the *Zakoyi*. A subsystem of the *Adawyiya* is called *Amwamwa* (“chasers of witches”). These *Amwamwa* take care of witchcraft practices that are related to the ancestors.²⁵

The Gbagyis believe that their dead ancestors are not completely dead; they are “living dead,” who are deeply involved in the welfare of their own living offspring. They are believed to occupy the spiritual realm. As a result, they can easily watch over their offspring. Nevertheless, if they are not looked after through proper funeral rites and appropriate periodical ceremonies, they might become dissatisfied, angry, and harmful.²⁶ They “inspire great fear and extreme caution.”²⁷ The Gbagyi perceive that all physical and moral manifestations of evil are associated with the spirits and they should be cast off. They have devised various rituals to fight against misfortunes and witchcraft practices and to liberate themselves from fear and agony.

The Gbagyi recognition of mystical sources of powers as very dangerous and inherently disastrous, if not properly curtailed, draws from an understanding of the activities and actions of such powers. The strong social and religious role played by *Ashigbeda* who are empowered on behalf of certain spirits to act for men has made this belief survive over the years. The *Ashigbeda* people perform the role of unravelling mysteries around certain occurrences which always draw the people’s attention to them. The fact of evil lives with the Gbagyis and is understood from an elucidation of the Gbagyi worldviews with regard to ‘*Zafun Nukwoyi*’ (“Wicked souls”) and their activities.

Zoku

Zoku is an acceptable practice among the Gbagyi and is highly esteemed because, in it, lays the ability to see the destiny of a person, society, and life in general. Jarumi observed that it is a strong method used in “detecting witches.” It involves what he calls *zokushe* (“foretelling the future”) which is used to “reveal the unknown or find out the wish of a divinity or spirit.”²⁸ The basis of *zoku* is largely a collection of traditional proverbs and some incantational words known only to the *Azokuda*, who alone have the knowledge of the appropriate enchantment and procedure that could lead to an effective *zoku*. Through the services rendered, *Azokuda* holds the community closely to the traditional beliefs. This act involves the use of string bones (“*shinkun*”) and nuts, incantation known

as “*butsnuyi*” (swearing), to enable the *zoku* get the required results for any divination. Evan. M Zuesse states that “divination implies the presence of gods and spirits-agents of the divine that indirectly communicate the decree of the Ultimate.”²⁹ The Gbagyis understand divination as an act which gives them the opportunity to unearth their destiny through the help of the gods and spirits agents. Therefore, through the *zoku* they search for ways of either protecting or interfere with such destinies. In most cases, *zoku* can be good or bad. It is bad when it reveals that there are evil forces or powers behind misfortunes which inform the search for intervention.

Ikenga-Metuh has argued that divination involves consultation that has to do with “birth, before marriage, during serious sickness, after a series of misfortunes, to obtain a job, to pass examination, before building a house,”³⁰ which are similar to the reason for why the Gbagyi consult *zoku*. It is in this understanding that the Gbagyi perception of divination holds. *Zoku* becomes actively dynamic, involved with the lives of the people through guidance in the strict path of *Knunu*, communing with the *azakoyi* on behalf of communities, families or individuals. Evans-Pritchard rightly observed that in Africa “Misfortune is due to witchcraft co-operating with natural forces.”³¹ The same is the concept among the Gbagyi who see nature involvement as divine through the herbal combined with mystical practices in *zoku*. (Herbs here represent natural forces while the incantations represent mystical forces both forces must cooperate before a witch can carry out his/her enterprise according to Gbagyi belief).

The effectiveness of *Zoku* lies with the natural components of the *ashigbe* that is usually drawn from the various herbal medicines available from the different trees in the land. The spirits of the *azakoyi* who, in their wisdom, reveal the types of shrubs to be used and which natural tree it was to be taken usually dictates this. The fact that everyone has a destiny from *Shekwoyi* (the “Supreme Being”), which the *zoku* chiefly foretell, does not in any way prevent assisting a person to discover the best way to influence their destinies positively. However, the Gbagyis in agreement with Idowu believe that there are myriads of spirits that run errand for the deities which make the work of evil forces so brisk and flourishing.³² In the process of running errands for the deities, the spirits tend to favour those who offer them the best gifts inform of sacrifice.³³ Likewise, the Gbagyi belief is that their destiny can be influenced and changed if the right sacrifices as prescribed by the *Azokuda* and accepted by any of the deities.

While people interpret misfortunes which they consider as loss to persons, differently, a distinctive feature of the Gbagyis is that interpretation lays in the concept of evil forces applicable to the works of evil spirits, deities, and persons. Hallen and Sodipo rightly observed, "Belief is behaving,"³⁴ which explains the condition of the Gbagyi's understanding of interpretation.

Agunzheyin

Nadel's work among the Nupes holds that, "witchcraft was seen as an evil thing and thus unpleasant matter to discuss."³⁵ The reason was not farfetched; they were weird, dangerous, wicked, heartless, malicious, revengeful, and deadly powers. Regarded mostly as enemies of progress, the *agunzheyin* use their powers to inflict pain and sorrows on their victims. The Gbagyi understand the role of the *agunzheyin* to be acquired rather than innate. Jarumi explains that *agunzheyin* derives from the Gbagyi perception of unexplainable mysteries of nature which *zoku* explains as the work of *agunzheyin* in nature.³⁶ Since they are perceived to have strange powers to cause tumultuous disequilibrium in people's lives, by their nefarious activities, fear and dislike for them is on the increase.

Like among the Nupes, witchcraft is said to be common among the Gbagyi women. The reasons adduced for this by Jarumi includes: polygamy, the non acceptance of a woman married into the family from another village other than that of the husband resulting in what Jarumi calls the "mother-in-law complex", and in "queer" and "ugly people."³⁷ Hallen and Sodipo, agree that women are the major culprits of witchcraft in most African traditions. This buttresses the theories of Evans-Pritchard, and Idowu that women are mostly involved in witchcraft; this belief cuts across almost all of the African religious traditions.

Before the coming of Christianity with its "one man one wife" teaching, Gbagyi traditionally were polygamists. The wives competed for their husband's attention, which has led some to desire power so that they can control the man. Such makes them become witches. However, there is also a small element of male participation in witchcraft. Therefore, the challenge posed by an acceptance of Christianity and its teachings will demand a complete overhaul of this tradition. There is a strong resistance as many women continue to be accused of witchcraft. Furthermore, such accusations often has "wreaked havoc on social relations and caused suffering to untold numbers of people."³⁸ Among the Gbagyi many

suspected witches were ostracised away from their families just because there was suspicion around them of being witches.

Although it is very difficult to understand the mechanism behind this belief, the activities which lead to accusations of witchcraft are considered by empirical sciences as natural occurrences (“thunder,” “wild wind,” “drought”),³⁹ yet to the Gbagyi people it is a dreaded concept. Bongmba emphasises the fact that witchcraft is not a “benign spiritual force,” rather it is an act that raises ethical questions.⁴⁰ The Gbagyis have no problems with the concept of witchcraft and will never question the validity of its use by anyone. They believe that there is a mystical force in it which they link to deities, spirits, and ancestors as vital forces with powers that could be used for good or evil.

The problem that led to syncretistic tendencies among the Gbagyi people is best summed up in Bongman’s submission that “missionaries were impatient with beliefs in spirits and spiritual forces other than the Holy Spirit.”⁴¹ Though Bongman’s work was not on the Gbagyi people specifically, it explains the misconception of early Missionaries which affected the spread of the gospel in Gbagyi land, in a sort of negative way. The Christianity preached to the people did not adequately address the issue of metaphysical forces so real to the Gbagyi man, yet trivialized by the Christian missionaries. How could they challenge the people’s belief and yet want them to accept theirs without resistance? It kept lots of Gbagyis from fully responding to the gospel and the flourishing of *agunzheyin* for a long time.

Ashigbe

Whenever *ashigbe* is mentioned in Gbagyi understanding, it refers to that medicine which has a mystical and transcendental ability to cure, heal, and ward off all evil attacks against a person. In the Igbo society, the roles of “diviners, priests, and medicine-men”⁴² are differentiated. Ikenga-Metuh observed: “Medicine for Africans primarily conveys the idea of forces contained and can be extracted from the properties of some plants and herbs and applied to the solution of a variety of human problems.”⁴³ Ikenga-Metuh however, sees magic as a purely mystical force which can influence or control events supernaturally.

Although this agrees with Gbagyi beliefs in the use of medicine as a curative agent, it however differs in the fact that both good and bad medicines are claimed to come from the same person. Thus, the Gbagyis regard medicine men as “herbalist,”⁴⁴ who commune with the spirits to

assist individuals achieve expected goals. Therefore, medicine-men can negatively be used against one's enemies and foes. This is where their medicine becomes a source of worry to the Gbagyi people. How do they comprehend a man endowed by the gods to deal with wicked men turning around to becoming a tool for wicked acts?

Medicine persistently has remained a common feature of Gbagyi's belief that has thrived because the Gbagyis see it as potent enough to address their teething problems. Temple observed that the Gbagyis maintain "a temple" in each village⁴⁵ which was a mark for the presence of a medicine-man and an identity of the Gbagyi Knunu. Most times, Medicine men are also "witch doctors." Parrinder says, "the witch-doctor is a person who seeks to doctor and cure those who are believed to have been bewitched."⁴⁶ This explains why *ashigbeda* are revered among the Gbagyis. The challenge is in the use of one preparation of medicinal concoction and the claim that it has the potency to cure several diseases. It is worthy of note that the *ashigbeda* has provided healthcare services to the Gbagyi people for centuries before the coming of both Islam and Christianity to Gbagyi land.

Today, some Gbagyis still patronise the *Ashigbeda* despite their romance with the two missionary religions. Temple was of the view that the cultural implications of the fact that "each individual Gbagyi worships a personal god or guardian spirit"⁴⁷ may explain the long survival of the syncretistic tendencies among the Gbagyi people.⁴⁸ Thus, the inability of Gbagyi Christians to see Christianity as a culture on its own created the dichotomy.

Conclusion

The reality of the mysteries of the power of witches and their effects on people's lives will continue to challenge modern culture and religious beliefs. The challenges of sicknesses that do not respond to 'modern medication or treatment', sudden misfortune at the point of success, death and all forms of calamities are still with the Gbagyi man as with other peoples. As long as these problems that are associated with evil still persist in this 'modern world', the Gbagyi, like any other people, will continue to seek for the solutions to the problems. Spiritual problem requires spiritual solutions, thus, the recourse to traditional spiritual options which overtime has proved to be effective to some extent. Witchcraft/witch doctors have served this purpose in Gbagyi land they have filled the spiritual vacuums in the life of the people. The

misconception of early Missionaries about witchcraft notwithstanding, Christianity and Islam must interpret and conceptualise their Holy Scriptures from the perspective of an African and a Gbagyi man/woman in particular and find acceptable protection against problem of evil associated with the activities of witches and wizards in the society until that is done the Gbagyi man has no choice but to turn back to *Knunu*.

Notes and References

1. M.A, Filaba, “The Search for Unity, the Challenges before the Gbagyi Nation”. A speech presented at Gbagyi Gbedogun (GSDA) Samaru Branch Zaria. 11th December 1993. p 2-3.
2. Henry Jay Watkin, “Witchcraft” *The Encyclopedia of Religion* 1st edition. ed. by Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Coy, 1987), pp. 415–423: 145, he sees the phenomena of witchcraft as being seen in sorcery, diabolical witchcraft (in the medieval and early modern Europe) and pagan revival of the twentieth century, to explain that witchcraft has been with mankind for a relatively long time.
3. “Witchcraft” *The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary Vol. 2* Lesley Brown ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 3702.
4. Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, “Witchcraft,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1935), pp. 417–422: 417. For a fuller understanding see Edward Evans-Pritchard, *E Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937)
5. E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A definition* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1973), pp. 175–176. Paul G Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw and Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1999), pp 148–150, highlights the concept Idowu gave as a common African beliefs in the spirit having the power to move around and cause harm to people, particularly on p. 148, the author explains that in witchcraft, “Witches prey on others, sucking the victims’ blood or eating their livers, hearts, or other vital organs, thereby causing a ‘waste away’ disease”, which is done mysteriously and thus, explains Idowu’s viewpoint clearer.

6. Barry Hallen and J. Olubi Sodipo, *Knowledge, Belief, and Witchcraft: Analytical Experiments in African Philosophy* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 89.
7. Gerrie Ter Haar, 'Ghanaian Witchcraft Beliefs; a view from the Netherlands' *Imagine Evil: Witchcraft Beliefs and accusations in Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007), pp. 93–112: 104–105.
- 8 .J. O. Kayode, *Understanding African Traditional Religion* (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: University of Ife Press Ltd., 1984), p. 6.
9. Umar Habila Dadem Danfulani, "Anger as a Metaphor of Witchcraft: the relation between Magic, Witchcraft and Divination among the Mupun of Nigeria," *Imagine Evil: Witchcraft Beliefs and accusations in Africa* ed. Gerrie Ter Haar (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007), pp. 141–184: 145.
10. Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw and Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books., 1999), p. 148.
11. B, Umaru "The Challenges of Gbagyi Culture on the 21st Century", A Speech presented on the Occasion of Gbagyi Cultural Festival Kaduna (Agbamafly) 2006. p.9
12. Enock Bezhe Jarumi, "Gbagyi Witchcraft Belief" *Gbagyi Journal* Vol. 2, No. 2, (2005), pp. 48–59: 48.
13. Harriet Hill, 'Witchcraft and the Gospel: Insights from Africa', *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1996, pp.323–344. Hill had observed in this article generally that a form of mixture of beliefs (syncretism) tend to have been perpetuated by this action, which to him is common among Africans.
14. Harold D. Gunn and F. P. Conant, *Peoples of the Middle Niger Region Northern Nigeria* (London: International African Institute, 1960), p. 88.
15. S. F. Nadel, *Nupe Religion: Traditional Beliefs and the Influence of Islam in a West African Chiefdom* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1954), p. 163. The Nupes are the closest neighbors to the Gbagyi people.
16. Gerrie ter Haar and Umar Habila Dadem Danfulani assert that British Colonialism enabled the survival of witchcraft in Ghana and Nigeria and it remains a moral problem. For further details see Gerrie ter Haar, "Introduction: The Evil called Witchcraft," *Imagining Evil: Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in*

- Contemporary Africa*, ed. Gerrie ter Haar, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc, 2007), pp. 1–30; Umar Habila Dadem Danfulani, “Anger as a Metaphor of a Witchcraft: the Relation between Magic, Witchcraft and Divination among the Mupun of Nigeria,” *Imagining Evil: Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa*, ed. Gerrie ter Haar, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc, 2007), pp. 141–184.
17. Charles Lindsay Temple *Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria*, 2nd ed. New imprint (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1919), pp. 530–531; Yusuf Turaki, *An Introduction to the History of SIM/ECWA in Nigeria 1893–1993* (Jos: Challenge Press. 1993), pp. 3, 38: further highlights that the SIM was a product of evangelical mission groups from North America and Canada, comprising Christians of various evangelical groups who were passionate about evangelism and mission. The Roman Catholic order which came to Gbagyi land was from Britain called “Society for African Mission” see “History of Diocese of Minna,” at <http://catholicminna.org/history.htm>, which claims the work started in “1911”.
 18. See the history of the Diocese of Minna on the Web at <http://catholicminna.org/history.htm>
 19. Yusufu Turaki, *An Introduction to the History of SIM/ECWA in Nigeria 1893–1993* (Jos, Nigeria: Challenge Press, 1993), p. 101.
 20. Turaki, *An Introduction to the History of SIM/ECWA in Nigeria 1893–1993*, pp. 103 – 107, where he listed dates and names of missionaries who worked to establish churches everywhere in Gbagyi land and the North as a whole.
 21. Enock Bezhe Jarumi, “Gbagyi Witchcraft Belief” *Gbagyi Journal* Vol. 2 No. 2 (2005), pp. 48–59: 50.
 22. Temple, *Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria*, p. 137. Temple emphasizes that if a person falls sick, members of the family he/she belongs to will go to that mysterious tree of the person’s spirit to pray and appease the god for the person’s recovery.
 23. Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Zande Trickster* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 12: Evans-Pritchard’s observations about the Zande are directly applicable to the Gbagyis.
 24. Mallam Shaibu Na’Ibi and Alhaji Hassan, *Gwari, Gade and Koro Tribes* (Ibadan: University Press, 1969), p. 13. The authors

- emphatically recognize the practice of ancestor veneration among the Gbagyi.
25. Enock Bezhe Jarumi, "Gbagyi Witchcraft Belief" *Gbagyi Journal* Vol. 2, No. 2, (2005), pp. 48–59: 58.
 26. For more details about ancestors see J S Mbiti, *Concept of God in Africa* (London: S.P.C.K., 1970)
 27. Emefie Ikenga-Metuh, *God & Man in African Religion* (Enugu: SNAPP Press Ltd., 1981), p.100. Considering the Igbos in Nigeria, Ikenga-Metuh believes that evil deities cause evil things among people. Therefore there is a cosmic battle between the good and the evil deities.
 28. E. B. Jarumi, "Gbagyi Witchcraft Belief" *Gbagyi Journal* Vol. 2. No. 2 p. 57.
 29. Evan M. Zuesse, "Divination and Deity in African Religion" *History of Religions* Vol. 15, No. 2 (1975), pp. 158 – 182: 160.
 30. Emefie Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions* (Onitsha, Nigeria: Imico Publishers, 1987), p. 220.
 31. E. E. Evans-Pritchard "Witchcraft" *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1935), pp. 417–422: 419.
 32. E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, p. 175; Idowu argued that there are companies of spirits who have been commissioned in turns of errand to commit mischief while he was discussing the 'abiku' or 'ogbanje' concepts among the Yorubas.
 33. For more details see P. A Dopamu, *Esu: The Invisible Foe of Man* (Ijebu Ode: Shebiotimo Publications, 1986).
 34. Barry Hallen and J. Olubi Sodipo, *Knowledge, Belief, and Witchcraft: Analytical Experiments in African Philosophy*, p. 51. To them a person will act what he believes, thus it explains why many will want to wish the *Zoku* do whatever they are told to in other that they may attain the desired result.
 35. S. F. Nadel, *Nupe Religion: Traditional Beliefs and the Influence of Islam in a West African Chiefdom*, p. 164.
 36. Enock Bezhe Jarumi, 'Gbagyi Witchcraft Belief' *Gbagyi Journal*, p.50.
 37. *Ibid*, pp. 53–54. He further explains that the competition for the attention of the husband among the wives makes them susceptible to witchcraft just as childlessness is often attributed to witchcraft.

38. Walter E. A. van Beek, “The Escalation of witchcraft accusation” *Imagining Evil: Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, Inc, 2007), pp. 293–315: 294.
39. *Ibid*, p. 295.
40. Elias K. Bongmba, “Witchcraft and the Christian Church: Ethical Implications” *Imagine Evil: Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa* ed. Gerrie ter Haar (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007), p. 116.
41. *Ibid*, p.118.
42. Emefie Ikenga-Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual schemes: the problem of Interpretation* (Jos, Nigeria: Imico Press, 1985), p. 167. The Igbo of Nigeria have distinction in the understanding of the medicine men unlike the Gbagyis, where an herbalist is seen also as a medicine man.
43. Emefie Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions*, p. 212; stated that there are good and bad medicines which gives an understanding of how evil can come out of medicine.
44. In some context they are called witch-doctors because most of their activities are seen to be limited to catching and detecting witches. They are also perceived as knowledgeable in the things that can douse the effectiveness of witches.
45. C. L. Temple, *Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Provinces of Northern Nigeria*, p. 131. He was referring to ‘shrines’ where medicine men use as means of contact with the world of the spirits.
46. Geoffrey Parrinder, *Witchcraft: European and African* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 15.
47. C. L. Temple, p.137.
48. K.K. Shazin, “Distinguish between Culture and Religion”, *Gbanaco Journal: Gbari Christian National Magazine*, Vol. 1, No.1, (2007), pp. 72–77: 76.