

Child-Witch Phenomenon: A Stratagem for Capital Accumulation

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Abstract

Witchcraft labeling in the past had been expressed towards women and the elderly, but in recent times labeling of children has become a fad for some clergy who find exorcism a veritable enterprise for capital accumulation. Although studies have concentrated on witches as beneficiaries and principal actors in the witchcraft riddle, this paper focuses on the economic gains that accrue to the clergy and other stakeholders in the Akwa-Ibom child-witch phenomenon. The ethnographic study examined the role of the church in witchcraft labeling and the motives behind the act. The study revealed that the church plays key role in authenticating witchcraft label, which is successfully linked to profiteering on religious pretext. Social visibility and capital accumulation are the motives in stakeholders maintaining the enterprise. Since these are motivated by economic and religious reasons they are serious indictment on the church in Akwa-Ibom state as a moral institution.

Key words: accumulation, child-witchcraft, capital, stratagem.

1. Introduction

Witchcraft labeling is a common phenomenon in most parts of Africa. In Akwa-Ibom state for instance, hundreds of children have been incriminated by ‘men of God’ and are subsequently sent out of their homes by their parents unto the streets. The ills of labeling are traumatic for adults to talk less of children. They, in fact could be demoralizing to children who had become objects of such labels. Prior to the child witch syndrome becoming a national issue, witchcraft in Akwa-Ibom state, and in fact in most parts of Africa, had been expressed traditionally towards women and the elderly. But in contemporary times, at least in Akwa-Ibom emphasis has shifted from the elderly and women to vulnerable children who are increasingly victims of witchcraft accusations by ‘men of God’, as believable character.

Akwa-Ibom child witches assumed prominence in 2001, when a few of the children began to parade the streets of major cities of the state like Uyo, Eket and Oron. In Eket, the children were hanging out in places like Mobil filling station, Sports stadium, Motor Park and the Market where they usually scavenged for food. Thereafter, they retire to makeshift apartments they have made in Marina, a choice location in the town. This development is not unconnected with the activities of some spiritual homes that had grown in response to desires for spiritual solutions to existential problems. The Ibibio have resort to prayer houses and men of God for solutions to every problem including socio-economic issues. As they do so, it has resulted in proliferation of churches. Subsequently, multiplication of “liberating pastors” whose hallmark is labeling, aimed at acquiring prestige, recognition and wealth assuming prominence and relevance in a community so obsessed with the fear of witches. Adeolu (2009) has noted that many of the pastors engage in witch-hunting and exorcism as strategy to attract teeming followers to their churches, and large offerings accruing as well.

The men of God appear to even contradict the biblical injunction which says “suffer not a witch to live” (Exodus 22:18). Rather they consider it their duty to exorcise the spirit of witchcraft from the children not totally altruistic, particularly in the context of the exposition of one Bishop Williams, popularly known as *Ulup Aya*. It was reported in the Nations newspaper of 14th May, 2009 that he claimed to have killed no fewer than a hundred children suspected to be witches. He was also reported to have charged between ₦2 Million and ₦4 Million for each case of exorcism, depending on the gravity of the problem.

The more the children are labeled, and money cannot be paid for the exorcism, the more they are on the street, not only because they are labeled as witches, a label which calls for urgent attention and intervention, but because their lives are threatened within a corporate existence of the society (Ekong 2001). As efforts are made to exorcise the spirit out of the accused at all cost, the children are sent to the street by parents and invariably

into a climate of uncertainty due to the culture of materialism being pursued by the clergy at the expense of the vulnerable children. This has initiated a shift in value and resulted in the culture of commoditization of the human body as argued in this paper.

Studies on witchcraft have been viewed through socio-cultural lens as explanations of misfortunes, (Evans-Pritchard 1973, Mair 1976, Offiong 1991, Haviland 2002.). A few studies have also explained the phenomenon via the economic theory, as factor of inequities in social relations, and access to and distribution of scarce resources in the society. Some even argued that the underlining cause is poverty and hardship, as well as income shock resulting from poor agricultural yields and death of livestock (Ogembo 2006, Oster 2004, Miguel 2003). The fact that most witch hunting activities takes place in poor communities and victims are mostly the impoverished members of the community attest indisputably to economic factor underlining witchcraft accusations. This study aligns with such a view but differ slightly from the regular economic dimension that assumes witchcraft is the cause of economic hardships and misfortunes. It links the witchcraft phenomenon to modern religious institutions crave for economic and material gains. The participants in the drama are namely the pastors, care-givers and institutional actors that derive social visibility and economic gains from the enterprise.

This paper is based on investigation into the role of the church in detecting child witches with the view to uncover the motives underlying exorcism and care shown to the victims. It also deals with labeling culture, as a flourishing enterprise being devised by religion. The focus is primarily on child witches, especially those children abandoned to the street as a result of witchcraft label in Eket, Akwa-Ibom state. Eket constitutes a local government within Akwa-Ibom state of Nigeria and was specifically chosen for this study because Eket has come to the fore of national and international scandals due to the media broadcast on child-witch phenomenon by a British television channel, a "C4" documentary titled "Saving the African Witch Children" sponsored by Stepping Stone; a UK based Non Governmental Organization (NGO).

A substantial portion of the data in this work is based on the culture, experiences, and the strategies of living devised by the people and the churches in Eket. The entire community is the population of study. The research sample covers three churches (prayer houses) in Eket, and one institutionalized home, Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network (CRARN), located at Ikot-Afaha in Eket, where labeled children were custody at the time of this study.

The ethnographic study lasted for over one year and employed both primary and secondary data. The data was collected by qualitative methodology and it consists of participant observation, in-depth interview and focused group discussion adopted in collection of oral data. Participant observation was used in the three churches selected for study; Focused group discussion was carried out with the pastors in Eket, while In-depth interview was used in the three churches, CRARN and in the community. Informants for in-depth interview include Pastors and members of the churches. From the community, opinion leaders, royal fathers, social workers, street children, their parents and agnates and the general public were all interviewed. At CRARN, members of staff and labeled children themselves were interviewed. Unstructured interview based on question guide were used. Secondary sources of information came from newspaper publications, magazines, journal articles and books. Narratives and vignettes in the first person account were adopted in the analysis of the data. The interpretation was pursued via thematic capturing of research objectives and contents, in a way that verbal and non-verbal texts were deconstructed.

Taussig's (1980) Commodity Fetishism, (Devil Belief Model) forms the theoretical explanation of the data collected. The theory highlights the dominance of commodity as attributes of life, power, autonomy and dominance in society. These elements bestow on men some favours and could alienate others from their labour. It is a theory of a society in which relations among people take the form of relations among things. It explores the disruption of unity/ relationship between the producer and his product. It is thus a conceptual paradigm which underscores the effects of capitalism on social relations. Specifically, because there is displaced definition of value from intrinsic worth of an object (a person) to the monetary value (price tag) placed on it, a person is now measured by the monetary price, and so do his/her actions and responses. The devil belief model portrays the devil as symbolically presenting and representing the deep-seated changes in the material conditions of life, as well as the changing criteria in the concept of creation, life, and growth through which the material conditions and social relations are defined (Taussig,1980).

The Devil Belief Model is particularly a mediation of opposites, of the tension between use and exchange values. While the peasants produced in order to satisfy their needs, the capitalist mode of production inclined the rich to maximize profit. To achieve this, capitalism tagged its products with a price which differentiates it from

their counterparts in pre-capitalist system even when the articles are the same. It is our view that in Akwa-Ibom, the clergy whose intent is to maximize profit, use child witch labeling to reach the same goal of capital accumulation, through what Harris, (1975) considered a calculated egoistic advantage over defenseless others/children. What happens in Akwa-Ibom reflects the emergence of individualistic and materialistic value and the profit oriented norm of capitalism. Expectedly, economic accumulations by a few at the expense of the majority others can and do in fact endanger communal solidarity when clouded in deception and moral dilemmas.

2. The Role of the Church in Detecting Child Witches

The church, variously located across the space of Akwa-Ibom, plays key role in detecting/ authenticating witchcraft label. The three churches, or 'prayer houses' (as they are otherwise known), that we observed, could be mistaken as a brand of the Christian movement popularly referred to as Pentecostals. But they differ in several ways from the Pentecostal movements, and probably qualify more as spiritualist churches than as Pentecostals. Without attempting a comprehensive distinction between them, it is pertinent for analytical precision to highlight some of their similarities and differences. Like the Pentecostals, they believe in spiritual warfare, and the view that believers are in battle with the devil that is represented by all categories of evil workers-demons, witches, marine spirit, among others. As such, believers are to contend with the devil in battle, using prayers. They, like the Pentecostals equally promote interest in deliverance, as an act designed to rid members of devil's influence (Meyer, 1999; Gifford, 2001; Stritecky, 2001, Robbins, 2003). They, however differ in that prayer houses conducts are, in a sense, like the-*aladura* churches or the Cherubim and Seraphim, as they are sometimes called, in that they are syncretic, and harp on visions and prophecies. The exorcism they perform is symbolic, extending beyond prayers, to the use of symbols such as olive oil, lime, water and the administrations of concoctions accompanied by assignments and sacrifices in order to achieve the desired result of exorcism. There is price tagging in the assignments they give. Demands are made from congregation with specific price tags. There is also the hidden nature of accusations, as specific names are carefully avoided while general non personal ones are used to designate the 'enemies', as the extract below reveals,

....One day, my father wife carry me to one church, when we got to the church, the pastor said my father wife should keep me at the front while she sat at the back. The pastor was prophesying, saying who has this spoilt child? Because it was a plan, my father wife stood up but I was not the only child in the church o! The pastor ask her to come out, asking her if she remember the television that spoil in the house, the radio that spark and when they collect car key from her husband, (my father was a tanker driver), that I was the cause, that I took the car key and put it in a pot in witchcraft world. He said he will put me in fasting for one month, that I will only take lime and olive oil throughout the period. When we got home, my father wife told my father all that happened, he beat me seriously. He threw me on top of the roof and use ladder to climb and push me down, I couldn't walk again. He sent me out of the house.

(Source: Extract from personal interview, with a labeled child at CRARN, February 2011).

This kind of story is quite familiar in Eket. Her problem was initiated by her step mum, who accused her of witchcraft. To affirm her position, she was taken to the church. Unfortunately, her problem, rather than abet, became compounded when the church, along with her step-mum connived and identified her as the 'spoilt child' in the congregation. Though there were other children present in the church she was the specific one pointed out. The idea of the 'spoilt' aggravated interpersonal relations moving it fast beyond redemption. She did understand that her case was a ploy between her step-mother and the pastor; meaning that the solution is worked out with the other, and that the whole process was fake and discreditable. Yet, she could not refute the allegations as a child in relationship with adults, and even as one before the 'oracle' - the pastor, who had formulated 'evidence' to authenticate his claim. To her, it was a lie, but a lie only needs evidence to be established as fact; and that evidence was the television that sparked and the car key that was collected from her dad. They were the 'proof' of the atrocities she had committed as a witch. She was gradually, but systematically, being destroyed as human and devalued as social capital.

Her story portrays the role of the church and the steps that could be involved in authenticating witchcraft label. First, is that suspicion at home requires affirmation/assistance of a man of God, perceived as authority in spiritual matters. Hence, the children are taken to the church perhaps in anticipation/recognition of the reformative role of the church that is presumed or ought to be a corrective institution where individuals could be

molded through moral lessons. Second, the church is a spiritual clinic where treatment and succor can be accessed by the afflicted, either through the process of counselling or at prayer meetings where the supernatural (which is believed to control the mundane) is invited to intervene in the affairs of the troubled or afflicted. Third, the “body”, rather than experiencing transformation, is converted into object of wealth through labeling that could be exploited for accumulation of capital by the pastors/ prophets who place value on them in terms of their degree of ‘usefulness’ to the pastors and the capability of the parents to pay the demands. Otherwise, they are abandonment to the street as irredeemably useless.

3. Labeling Process: As Means to Capital Accumulation

The process of labeling varies slightly from one church to another. There was no case of direct labeling of a child that we observed; perhaps due to the prohibition placed on child-witch labeling as a result of the adoption of the Child Rights’ Act by the Akwa-Ibom state government. The act criminalizes the stigmatization and witchcraft labeling of children. However, there were insinuations pointing to kins, colleagues, institutional members, as was the case with one of the female member whom the minister warned about somebody she loves so much, she lives with and who treats her as a sister but who had sponsored witches to kill her. The minister encouraged her to terminate her relationship with the lady immediately. Labeling has its root in accusations and the pressure to scrutinize with the aim of rejecting relationships: As for instance, the step-mother does not want the step-daughter; the father does not want to see his son. Once there is somebody to accuse, whether the accused deny such allegation or not, the pastor would be consulted for verification. In most cases, especially those that involve children unable to defend themselves, the accusation/label stands. There is, in fact, a situational dimension to a labeling act, such that it can happen at any instance of non-compliance to the directives of the leader of the church or home. For example, as the officer leading the prayer in one of the churches says, ‘anybody who does not pray this prayer is a witch’. A prayer topic is raised at this instance, to thwarting the plans of witches. The refusal to comply with such prayer is an act of disobedience to God and man tantamount to being a witch.

Counselling is another process that leads to labeling because it offers an ideal occasion to extract information from a client. The information extracted becomes pointer to the fears and suspicions of the counsellee and the possible interpretations of his/her experiences. During counselling, as we observed of some churches, questions are cleverly asked to confirm/affirm a position, in such a way that answers can be insinuated to prove an understanding of the counsellee situation and justify the appropriateness of counsellor’s interpretation. Prophets/ Pastors employ this “motivational approach” to psyche the person into believing what they say. They, during counselling impose their authority and claims by shouting at individuals, to possibly intimidate and coerce people into submission. Other means, such as generalized prophecies and blessings, are artfully devised to ascertain peoples’ problems and needs. When people come out for general altar calls, they invariably acknowledge that they have problems. Prophecy brings out their peculiarities for identification.

Members and non-members alike do look forward to prophesy. So obsessed are they with prophesy that, as Offiong (1983) notes, highly established Ibibio surreptitiously steal into spiritualist churches to consult about personal problems, witchcraft attacks and request for prayers and prophecies. The reason is obvious, following the trend of the prophecies that we observed, it appears there is a divide between the imagined, expected and the anticipated on the one hand, and reality, experience and what is, on the other. Life shifts between experiences which we reject and aspirations we desire to realize. Both are mediated by forces known and unknown (sickness, unfulfilled dreams and unrealized visions, forces of darkness, evil, witches), and by forces stronger than individual’s capacity to challenge. With statements like, “You ought to be a star, but your family...” “You ought to have gained admission, but your brother...” and “you ought to have married, but your step-mother....;” expectations are raised and then dashed. But there is a promise of solution. In order to get the expected, assignments must be done, obligations must be met, and greater powers must be invited to mediate or deal with hindrances. The evil is parried away because the victim is in the presence of a superior force or in the right place, a place in the conception of the pastor “where every problem receives kingdom solution” as is boldly inscribed in the sign post of one of the churches along Odugidem Street, by Etebi-Idungiwak. This is to highlight the relevance of the pastor/church to critical situations and their resolutions; their intervention is needed to enable individuals’ progress. Hence, prophecies are to be received and obeyed unquestionably.

Members tend to believe so much in prophecies that its authenticity is not doubted. Interview with a member of one of the churches revealed that prophecies are believed to have come from God; as such, they are true and cannot be questioned. She asked, rhetorically, “Can God lie? The woman of God represents God. So I believe

whatever she says, because the Bible tells us to believe the prophet". Apparently, she was referring to the Bible passage (2 Chronicles 20:20) that states: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established, believe his prophet so shall ye prosper". The emphasis that is drummed into those with problems is that the prophet must be believed as an "oracle of God" irrespective of what he/she says, while is supposed to have come from God. Prophecy has become an act difficult to do away with because it earns pastors social visibility and respect and acts as respite to those troubled. The leaders in the three churches visited were addressed as 'oku', 'mama', 'papa' and prophets, nomenclatures that fuel their ego. They were adored by members and their words were regarded as law. Parents can and do abandon their children simply on the advice/instruction of the 'man of God', as some revealed during the interview. The dilemma for the doubters, however, is whether these prophets/pastors are truly from God, going by what they do and the motives driving their actions.

Many prayer points, prophecies and slogans centered on the acts of witches. The 'witch' is in most cases not clearly specified, but come out disguised in speeches and prophecies as 'your friend', 'teacher', 'colleague', and 'neighbour'. Definite, specific and vivid descriptions are artfully avoided while obscure and ambiguous allusions are used to denote the suspect. This style of accusation, being imprecise, leaves room for guessing, and could lead to false accusations when, more so, perceived enemies are labeled (Mair 1976). The victims are often people in close affinity: the uncles, aunts, step-father, step-mother, siblings and extended family members. This would suggest, as scholars like Geshiere (1997) had noted, that, witchcraft is the dark side of kinship. The craft is grounded on the perceived needs of people, as the cause(s) of their pains. From the information collected, there are lots of conjectural postulations, quite aside from the fact that the problem, having been raised to a metaphysical level, makes refutation of propositions difficult. In any case, one could see the material angle of financial gain as a strong motivation for wanting to problematize the cause(s), so that the vulnerable can be exploited.

In the three churches visited, the emphasis was on money, either as offerings collected several times under diverse cliché such as 'covenant offering', 'testimony offering', 'breakthrough offerings' and 'exchange offering', or through such other devices as fund raising, 'Maria', 'consultation fee', selling of olive oil, money dropped on 'joy seat', 'seed faith' and lots more. The prophecies required one assignment or the other to perform, which involved either money or exchange of materials. The 'spiritual overtaking' and 'Id card' purported by one of the pastors are means of extracting money from people, and those who lacked are forced to borrow to pay the demands as one of the reconciled families visited in the course of this fieldwork intimated. This, essentially capitalist act, subjugates social relations to economic laws of profit, at the expense of vulnerable victims who are subjected to outrageous inhuman experiences and the violation of their civil rights.

4. Child Witches as Products of Elite and Religious Profiteering

Economic hardship has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society, such that those that ought to set and uphold moral ethics and standards like the pastors are incapable of resisting temptations that involve financial and material rewards. Similarly, Engana and Bamidele (1999) rightly noted, when joblessness keeps the individual in a position where he is unable to cater adequately for his basic needs, as well as meet social and economic obligations, survival strategies that are devised are usually anti-social. The deplorable economic situation in Akwa-Ibom has prompted many people to adopt alternative means of survival. In Eket, for instance, there is increasing number of people who parade themselves as pastors, and there is an unhealthy competition 'to make it in ministry' in a town saturated with churches. The fierce competition for survival among churches stirs up the struggle for the control of the spiritual landscape of Eket, and the more powerful and relevant a church/pastor appears in dealing with the situation, the greater the chances of survival and dominance.

Western influences equally impacted on church conduct, reorienting pastors' conception of their roles as shepherds, whose preoccupation is to nurture, tend, lead and guide the sheep (members). Gifford (2002), specifically points to the American faith preachers of the 1960s and 70s, whose prosperity gospel influenced Nigerian preachers greatly. They and their Nigerian colleagues thus became preoccupied with materialistic ends, destroying the protective and caring roles they were formerly noted for. Public display of flamboyance has become the fad, showcased in magnificent church buildings, ostentatious life style and in bogus and unguided utterances of most clergy. The intense desire for capital accumulation informs their strategies of using positions to raise expectations of members by promising them 'breakthroughs' and 'open doors' without guaranteeing the means to the attainment. When such promises are not attained, the failure is explained as the devilry of witchcraft. Vulnerable and defenseless children who are absolutely dependent on adults for protection become susceptible to this elite manipulation and labeling, concealing their latent capitalistic motives. The inordinate

passion for wealth by egoistic men, in a changing social environment that applauds material and financial success, translates as the manipulation of the weak, ostensibly for money.

The pastors capture and control the parents' minds through scary messages that entrap them into giving out what they have. The concept of Commodity Fetishism as espoused by Taussig (stated earlier) captures the selfish scheme of these 'men of God', who have turned the 'body' of people into financial capital that accumulates. The 'seal of the market price' - the 'body' - lies at the dichotomy between use and exchange-value. Exorcism mediates the two, in which communality and mutuality give way to personal interest and exchange. Through the exchange value of persons, others acquire the right to deploy them to produce more use-value than those reconverted into commodities as wages. Depending on the deployment of the sophistry, which inheres in "sheep allegiance to the shepherd", as one of the pastors stated during the focused group discussion with them, they take advantage of the weak. The reason is simple: Their religion, like capitalism, alienates its adherents; and assign them to different social class. The more members are committed to their pastors, the more alienated they become to themselves, and the more they lose their discretions to him. Of course, Marx,(1996) had rightly pointed out that alienation is inherent in social relations in which one party (class), in this case the clergy, appropriates the labour which alienate the other. They (pastors), thus, become, in an informant's words, cheats who would claim to be able to do all kinds of things. The insatiable appetite of these men of God for material benefits is raising query as to their credibility as evident in the use of words such as 'fake', 'cheats', 'deceivers' 'not approved of God' and the likes, used by informants to qualify and describe those who have turned human bodies into capital. The issue is simple: the 'body' of the 'witch' is a financial rather than a social capital and the intension is that of making money out of it without recourse to the pride and integrity of the victim. The fact is that the 'body' of the children have lost the power of voice, as objects of money, driven by forces unknown and unheard.

Suffice to say that the clergy are not alone in this enterprise. The children's body has also been commoditized by parents whose ground for reconciliation is the incentives that accrue from the body -the financial support parents receive from the NGOs Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network (CRARN) and Stepping Stone Nigeria (SSN), for relocation and economic empowerment. The use value of the body, to them, is relative to its exchange value; that is, the amount of capital it yields to parents finally at reconciliation. Little wonder, Ban Ki-moon (2013), lamented that the present world has become a criminal market in which human being are now the commodity that are priced, negotiated and sold.

It can also be argued that the value of the body is profitable in another manner. For instance, CRARN is seen as a sham, as expressed by one of the parents of a reconciled child interviewed, who feels CRARN is insincere because they use the children to promote their activities and interest without adequate requital to them. Their view is that CRARN is exploiting the situation as an NGO, to promote an advantage of the social capital of the body, when it displays the children in the media as an exhibition that could attract attention/ recognition and financial support, both nationally and internationally. Informants complained that the organization has profited from such social visibility to foster capital accumulation. That is, CRARN is an opportunist that uses existing human problems for personal enrichment.

A renowned Evangelist in the neighbouring Cross River state, speaking in an interview with Newswatch magazine, of 4th January 2009, insisted that the president of CRARN ventured into "fight" against child labeling because of the money the United Kingdom government voted to fight child abuse. She reasoned that the child-witch phenomenon was being used to raise funds from the international community for personal satisfaction. Similar view has been expressed by a lawyer, in an interview with The News magazine of 8th march 2010, where he claimed that with the money raised by the founder of SSN, on the child-witch issue, make them more comfortable now than when they started.

Akwa-Ibom state government accused the organization of using the situation in Akwa-Ibom state to dupe people. She describes the enterprise as a hoax. Similar claim had been made in March, 2010 when The News Magazine of 8th march 2010 reported Akwa-Ibom child witchcraft affair as 'one big scam' masterminded by Itauma and Foxcroft (founders of the two NGOs that support labeled children). The concern then was that the huge amount of money raised on behalf of the children was not fully expended on them judging by their living condition. The assumption is that the children were merely used to better the lots of the founders of the two NGOs. These allegations revealed the credibility gap and distrust for purported care givers.

Other beneficiaries in this child-witch enterprise include child traffickers that exchange them/their services for monetary value. They are equally used by members of the public who enslave them in child labour, and by lustful men who turn them to objects of sexual gratification and veritable factories for producing babies. They,

thus, become commodity objects whose prices are determined by market forces -pastors, parents, CRARN, community and traffickers within a depressed local/national economy. They are, as a metaphoric 'body' extrinsically separated from the self; having lost their essence as humans. They are treated as lifeless articles devoid of the power of choice. They are devoid of the intimacy and sense of worth inherent in the organic unity between the producer and his product, and in capitalism exchanged for money given as wages or incentives, aimed at motivating the producer to produce more for exchange value. This is obvious in the stipends given to the children by their exploiters, who use them to accomplish their desires. It also represents the 'interest' shown by pastors who recommend exorcism, pretending to have genuine concern for the children.

5. Conclusion

The critical material being assessed by every stakeholder in the resolution of this social problem of the child-witch is the 'body'. It (body) is converted into labour or object of wealth which, either way, could be exploited for accumulation of capital by stakeholders (Pastors, parents, traffickers, lustful men and CRARN) who had placed value on them in terms of the degree of usefulness. Otherwise, the body is considered 'undesirable', 'debased' and 'worthless'; terms which immediately conceal a motive which is to attract more market value (price) to the users. Because, so painted, the children may be seen as useful by others that by various strategies exploit the situation through prescribed assignments. Charges are paid on them, as on service. Failure to meet up with the exchange value of the body in the market place nullifies the prescribed remedy and renders the child irredeemably useless as one that should be abandoned or thrown away. The act, (this method of acquiring wealth) from Taussig's perspective, is cheaply gained, by placing oppositional value on the object, and the labour value is then conjectural.

This paper concludes that there is more to it than meets the eye in the Akwa-Ibom child witch phenomenon. The paper reveals the "abnormality" occasioned by materialistic and capitalistic tendencies to exploitation situations of economic reality and misuse of power, privileges and positions. There is clear contradiction in the roles expected of the stake holders (pastors, parents, CRARN and the community), who should provide love and succor to the afflicted but, rather, were clearly interested in the benefits that accrue from the body. In the long run this work is indicative of the waning value of mutual assistance and genuine care for the afflicted ones due to the culture of accumulation that has beclouded sense of decency and responsibility. It is thus a negation of the morally valid and ascribed statutory role and positions ascribed by culture to each of the stakeholders.

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