

Analysis of Factors Precipitating Witchcraft Accusation among the Tiv

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ABSTRACT The aim of the paper is to analyze the sociological factors precipitating witchcraft accusation among the Tiv people of Nigeria. The paper adopts case study as a research design while focus group discussion and key informant interview methods are used for data collection. It is discovered that scramble for power and domination plays a major role in witchcraft allegations. However, the other factors also contribute to witchcraft accusations. It is recommended that effective and efficient ways of identifying witches should include use of orthodox method of swearing *swem*, divination and consultation with elders who are perceived to be endowed with supernatural powers and powerful men of the Christian God.

INTRODUCTION

Witchcraft is a social fact and a worldwide phenomenon that is prevalent in Africa and other parts of the world, especially in the third world countries. In Africa, it is generally believed that witches have the power to harm other people by virtue of the inherent quality which enables them to leave their bodies and make spiritual journeys for the attack. Witchcraft is believed to be practiced within kinship group as harm could be inflicted on a person by a member of his kin and as such is seen as bane of kinship (Geschiere 1997; Wegh 2003). It is believed to achieve a double result as it could be used to cause misfortune and at the same time steer individual's socio-economic and political progress (Wegh 2003). The belief in power of witches allows people to make sense of their seemingly arbitrary misfortunes and pin blame on a particular person rather than coincidence, thus leading to allegations of witchcraft (Ashforth 2001).

The belief in witchcraft is followed by concomitant increase in cases of witchcraft accusations. These accusations are often accompanied by violence, torture, execution and forced exile of the presumed witches when unfortunate events such as death, disease, drought and poor harvest occur (WHRIN 2014). A report by IN-SEC (2012) noted that those identified as witches are: "tortured, have soot smeared on their face, beaten with hands and fists, with implements, with stinging nettles, forcefully fed excreta, burned, blinded and murdered." Apart from the accusations becoming a physical threat, the

accused witch also faces stigmatization. The stigmatized people tend to suffer psychological pains and social exclusion even when there is no potential to inflict physical harm upon him.

It should, however, be noted that witchcraft accusations may not exist in a vacuum but rooted in the socio-cultural and economic processes of the particular societies. These conditions determine who is labelled as a witch and under what circumstances. The circumstances may be conscious or unconscious and beneath these conditions may underlie competition for scarce resources, power and domination among men. It has been felt that people tend to accuse others of witchcraft when they consciously or unconsciously feel threatened socio-culturally, economically and psychologically. It may, therefore, not be out of place to think that witchcraft accusations could be a reflection of inherent struggle for resources, domination and power among men and within groups.

Among the Tiv of Nigeria, witchcraft is rampant and so are the accusations. These accusations often lead to maltreatment of the alleged witches whenever there is misfortune or ill luck. When a young man dies, youth tend to accuse the aged in the community of employing witchcraft resulting to their being tortured by the youth and even killed. When someone's farm or business is not doing well, he tends to blame a member of his kin for using witchcraft for destroying his farm or business. This could result to violent quarrels, forced exile, torture and eventual deaths. As already mentioned, the accusations may be unconsciously borne out of man's in-

herent competition for resources, power and domination. The present paper, therefore, focuses on the sociological analysis of factors responsible for witchcraft accusations among the Tiv using the conflict theory as a guide.

Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework

The Concept of Witchcraft

Various authors have offered a number of definitions and meanings on the subject matter of witchcraft. But in recent times, witchcraft has been classified and used interchangeably with magic and sorcery (Wegh 2001). Witchcraft is defined as “the exercise or invocation of alleged supernatural power to control people or events typically involving sorcery or magic” (Encyclopedia Britannica 1999). Maduagwa (2010) on his part connected witchcraft to the work of human beings who are believed meet secretly in the night, indulge in cannibalism, wickedness and organize rites and rituals with the devil and perform black magic. For Augé (1974) witchcraft is “a set of beliefs, structured and shared by a given population that address the origin of misfortune, illness and death, and the set of practices for detection, treatment and punishment that corresponds to these beliefs”. Gandu (2013) defines witchcraft as an evil act, eating the life soul of victims, operating in the night and a force that cannot be discovered ordinary.

Downes (1971) and Bohannan (1965) conceptualize witchcraft within the Tiv understanding. They see witchcraft as something that is neutral. Besides, it can be used for both good and evil purposes. Downes (1971) sees witchcraft as life and energy, the power that exists in nature, the unseen force which is necessary for the good generation and development of all living things, and also for interference with life and ordinary functions of nature. To Bohannan (1965), it is that aspect of personality which enables a man to dominate a situation, to turn events the way he wishes them to go, to command obedience and attract loyalty-be it through charm, persuasion, bullying or whatever means is the evidence of witchcraft.

In relations to the Tiv, Wegh (2003) defined Witchcraft (Tsav) as a mystical power, a tangible and intangible thing. In concrete terms, it is a substance that grows in the heart of people or

somewhere within the chest. It also grows in the heart of some animals and can be biologically transmitted by birth. In the Tiv society, if a person dies and is suspected to be a witch, the chest and heart is opened to ascertain whether he possesses witchcraft substance or not. A man without witchcraft is described as a person with “an empty chest” (*vangergbilin*) while a man who is a witch is seen as man with a malevolent chest (*vanger ubo*). The Tiv see witchcraft as being neutral as black *tsav* is good and white *tsav* is bad and used to bewitch (*tambe*) people, send them bad omens, inflict material losses on them and even cause death.

Through this angle, witchcraft could be defined as supernatural power that enables men to harm people, kill them, or cause misfortune to them by ensnaring their spirit (*jijingi*) and harming it which reflects physically on the victim.

Factors Responsible for Witchcraft Accusations

Literature on the factors responsible for witchcraft accusation is demographical, socio-economic, psychological, and cultural (Nadel 1952; Evans-Pritchard 1932) Nadel’s study of witchcraft in Nupe showed that gender and socio-economic status were fundamental in witchcraft accusations. In the study, witchcraft was found to have been ascribed to sex. Women were always accused of witchcraft and were called *gaci*. However, men were not accused of the act as their supernatural powers known as *eshe* was benevolent and used as checks on the excesses of female witches. On the socio-economic part, the women accused of witchcraft tended to trade with comparatively stronger economic muscle than the men. Then, the chief-witch was found to be the head of women traders, thus socio-economic status of the women was determined by their level of witchcraft power and control. Nadel (1952) went deeper to explore covert factors precipitating sharp sex antagonism in the ascription of witchcraft to women. He adopted psychoanalysis to identify frustrations and anxiety as principal causes. These psychological processes he found are caused by economic domination of men by the women and losing of control of the women by the men. Men resent this by unconsciously labeling women as witches. Mesaki’s (1994) study in Tanzania tended to associate witchcraft to age and ill luck. He main-

tained that most of the people accused of witchcraft tended to be elderly people who lived in impoverished households.

Nadel (1952) BBC (2001) and EWD (2002) linked witchcraft accusations to competition for resources in the family. Nadel's (1952) researches on the Korongo and Mesakin reported struggles between the sister's son and mother's brother over *anticipated inheritance* which is herd (sheep or cattle). The struggle is fierce and if during the conflict, the sister's son suffers misfortune or dies, the later is accused of employing witchcraft against the former. EWD (2002) report seem to have linked witchcraft accusation to poverty by stating that Bihar which is a poor state in India was witnessing increasing cases of witchcraft accusations which inevitably led to attacks.

Wegh (2001) identified poverty and physiological features as being responsible for witchcraft labelling among the Tiv. He reiterated that in several societies of the world, people with the propensity to be labelled as witches are those from the impoverished background arising from certain disabilities. Accusations are, therefore, directed at old women, especially widows in Africa who are childless, thus, suffering the stigma of a witch. Further, old cranky men, introverts, loners, quarrelsome and boastful persons are also vulnerable to accusations.

Witchcraft accusations in Africa are not confined only to the old people but also children in what may be known as child-witch labelling. In the face of recent economic crises in Congo, young children have become common culprits (BBC 1999, 2003), and many have been kicked out of their homes or killed by family members following household calamities and negative income shocks (*The Economist* 2002):

By one estimate there are 40,000 street children in Kinshasa, of whom 80% have been kicked out of their homes because their families thought they were witches...Death or disease in the family is often taken as evidence of sorcery. Failed crops, lost jobs and bad dreams also arouse suspicion. Midway through last year, several hundred children were turfed onto the street of Mbuji-Mayi, a mining town, after a sudden drop in diamond prices.

Miguel (2005) identified income shocks caused by Drought and flooding as precipitating witchcraft accusations. His finding also provided suggestive evidence that income shocks

lead to witchcraft accusations which is a necessary condition for the killings to occur, highlighting the possible interaction of economic conditions and cultural factors. To him, witch labelling, which is followed by witch killing patterns in Tanzania is consistent with a view in which socio-cultural factors are central. While many parts of Tanzania are poor, semi-arid and are regularly hit with large rainfall shocks, nationally two-thirds of all reported witch killings occur in the ethnically Sukuma regions of western Tanzania. In contrast, the effect of extreme rainfall is not significantly different in villages with more income, education, households growing cash crops, total households, or local women's groups.

Theoretical Framework

The conflict theory, propounded by Karl Marx, is based on dialectical and historical materialism. The theory assumes that society is composed of inherent contradictions and struggles between those who control resources (bourgeoisie) and those who work to earn a living (proletariat). In the struggle the bourgeoisie takes the chunk of the societal resources living the majority of the masses with few resources to scramble for. Marx argues that there are dialectics associated with this struggle. The elites who take the lump of these resources also compete among themselves for control, while the masses also scramble for meagre resources simultaneously. On the whole there is division of the society into two dominant classes over access to resources, and then, there is competition for these resources within the classes (Marx 1957).

Taking cue from the above, witchcraft from conflict perspective could be linked to struggle for resources and domination of man. These resources could be physical such as land, inheritance, and money; influence, power and spiritual such as *imborivungu* (object made of bones of ancestors or metal with great spiritual significance) and other spiritual artefacts. Those who control these resources also control and manipulate nature and man for their benefit. Therefore, witches tend to attain some sort of higher status in Tiv society by virtue of their control over resources and men due to their spiritual power to harm, destroy and or kill. Consequently, those who possess this power are liable to be labelled as witches and accused when there is

misfortune by those who do not have. Further, the struggle for power and domination may be reflected in witchcraft accusations as poor people have tendency to label wealthy people as witches because of their wealth. Jealousy, also, may not be unconnected with competition for resources as successful people may be accused of witchcraft. All these may have some element of a struggle for power and domination as the bases for these allegations.

METHODOLOGY

Area of the Study

Tiv are a group of people and the Tiv are named after their ancestral father Tiv. They inhabit the plains of Benue valley in the north central Nigeria and are found mostly in Benue state. However, considerable populations are indigenes of Taraba and Nassarawa state. The Tiv people are believed to have migrated from *Swem*, a location somewhere around Nigeria-Cameroun mountain axis. Around 1456, they started to move towards the Benue valley and have now spread across the North central region of Nigeria as stated in Makar (1975).

Several reasons have been advanced on migration of Tiv to this area. One of the reasons has been that the Tiv people being predominantly farmers found the vegetation in the present Lower Benue River suitable for agriculture and migrated to it. The second reason put forward was that the populations of the Tiv grew very rapidly, and since they lived in sparse settlements and practiced the shifting cultivation type of agriculture, they found the area irresistible (Bohannon 1953). In addition, the increase in population might have increased their military capability to give them effective advantage over their neighbors. This view is particularly strong because all the small ethnic groups around Tiv that were reluctant to move were either entangled or remained within the Tiv territory up to date or were defeated and pushed further. The last view being branded is that the migration into the Lower Benue River coincided with the military decline of the Kwararafa Confederacy in the nineteenth century. Thus, the Tiv did not find much resistance to their settlement in their present position (Makar 1975; Dzeremo 2002). Migrations during the pre-colonial times were largely carried out in groups and

batches, since land was largely not scarce. In such a case, the various clans or families in front spearheaded migration into virgin lands where resistance was weak.

The Tiv people are divided into four lineages, Kwande, Jemgbagh, Jechira, Sankera and Minda. They are predominantly farmers who also have firm belief in witchcraft and powers associated with it.

Research Design

The paper adopts a case study design while Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and key-informant interview are used to solicit in-depth data that is beyond the purview of quantitative designs.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

In the paper, the researcher purposefully selected 12 discussants for the discussion and 5 key-informants for the interview.

Technique of Data Collection

Under Focus Group Discussions, twelve (12) respondents were selected. The respondents held two discussion sessions. The discussion was conducted in a semi circular sitting formation to facilitate face to face contact among discussants and minimize any perceived difference between the discussants. To effectively conduct the discussion, the researchers engaged two research assistants for helping them in taking down the important points and recording of the discussion to complement her work of moderating the discussion.

In regards to Key informant interview, ten (10) respondents were purposefully selected. In the process of interview, the researchers first contacted the selected persons and booked appointment with them. Later on, the respondents visited on the appointed times for the interview.

Method of Data Analysis

With respect to Focus Group Discussion (FGD) the analysis involved ethnographic summary that involved reviewing statements made by the group on general and specific topics and determined whether there was agreement or consensus on the issues raised by the researcher.

The researchers listened to audio tapes again and again, identified the different positions that emerged regarding each topic and assessed the degree to which each person held to a position. They also re-read the transcription of summary notes from each discussion, identified common and divergent positions regarding each topic and linked them with research questions.

Under in-depth interview, the analysis involved the transcription of data from tapes and notes to analyze common and divergent themes or views.

RESULTS

Discussions manifest that the age may be one of the factors responsible for witchcraft accusation among the Tiv. By virtue of age, a man could become the head of the family that is often extended or kinship group. According to the tenets of the Tiv culture, an eldest person is the automatic head of the family or kinship and it is believed that such a person has become a witch (*or-mbatsav*) by default. As the eldest person, he possessed the power to see and determine the supernatural events concerning members of his kin. Therefore, when misfortunes, such as death or disease strikes, an aged person is likely to become the primary target to be accused as it is assumed that he was aware of event and has allowed it to happen. In addition, old women are likely to be labeled as witches because of their physical appearance resulting out of their age.

Key informant interview provided information that seems confirming the discussions made by the Focus Group.

Informant Interview No. 1

In Tiv traditional setting, you cannot rule out age when discussing witchcraft...the eldest persons in every family who are also heads of their respective families, are members of the ityo (elders council) which controls witchcraft activities in the land...Such people are aware of any potential danger and that any misfortune cannot occur without their knowledge... As soon as you became an elderly person, the ityo will give you spiritual eyes for seeing in the supernatural realm. Thus when something very bad happens, these aged people are always accused for perpetuating or allowing it because they serve as both physical and spiritual

head...old women are also subject to witchcraft accusations because of their physical appearance...

The discussions also indicate that material or wealth is a strong determining factor for witchcraft labeling in Tiv land. The Tiv believe in primitive communism where there is supposed to be no stark difference in material possession or wealth among members. In cases where one of the members begin to amass wealth, may be through business, agriculture or trade, people start to see it as abnormal and begin to suspect the person of witchcraft. The person could be accused of using *imborivungu*, an object made of shinbone or arm-bone or metal possessing huge spiritual power, to enhance fortune, good-luck and prosperity.

Key informant interview findings show thus:

Informant Interview No. 2

If you suddenly become rich... then it is witchcraft because our people use imborivungu to increase their wealth and to become powerful...This imborivungu requires blood sacrifice for servicing...In the events where people related to the wealthy person die or keep dying, he is accused of using his relatives which may be his siblings, children or wife, for sacrifice to service the imborivungu which has been responsible for his wealth.

Focus Group Discussions (FGSs) further proved that an out-spoken person is likely to be labeled as a witch. The Tivs believe that this quality is precipitated by confidence gained through witchcraft. Such a vocal person is not afraid to express his mind in the gathering of the *ityo* and by so doing has become vulnerable to witchcraft accusations. The person is accused of witchcraft with the belief that such fearlessness exhibited in discussions is masterminded by the power he possesses as a witch. Having such powers, there is a tendency for him to be fearless with the ability to talk anywhere without fear or intimidation.

According to a key informant;

Informant Interview No. 3

... a witch is so confident...in discussions or meetings with in the community. You notice the person expressing his feelings or opinion

about issues that other people would generally be cautious about in clear terms. This person is able to do this because he is filled with witchcraft powers (spiritual chest)...So when there is anything unnatural that happens and are in connection with issues he talks about, he is targeted and labeled as a witch.

During the discussions session, it was discovered that witchcraft accusations are likely to be pinged on people who express beliefs in witchcraft. They explain reality and happenings on tenets consistent with witchcraft beliefs. The people believe that protection, security, economic and farm successes could be achieved by witchcraft and their actions, at most instances, are on tandem with these beliefs. They often consult fortune tellers, diviners and oracle priests for protection and economic progress. Such people could normally keep objects or artifacts of spiritual significance in their home, farm, business premises and often wear mysterious rings and amulet.

The interview with key informants seems to agree with the findings provided by Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

Informant Interview No. 4

There are people that if you are close to them, you discover that their beliefs and discussions are shrouded in things and events that are oriented towards witchcraft...they say to protect yourself, you need a charm or ritual...your farm will be destroyed by enemies if you don't protect it with dark magic...to progress in life, you need to cleanse your soul spiritually from bad and ill-luck...One important thing is that the people are deep into these things they believe in...Such people are liable to be labeled as witches if something bad occurs...

The discussions also indicate that dressing and attire put on by a person is a determinant factor in witchcraft accusation among the Tiv. It was agreed that in Tiv society, putting on Traditional Skin Bag of Three Compartments (*ikpa-I-abor atar*) plus metal amulet (*Gbegba*) hanged on one side of the shoulder makes one liable to be labeled as a very powerful witch. It is believed among the Tiv that a person who wears these attire may have attained the highest level in the spiritual realm with one of the strongest powers among witches. It is believed that coming in physical contact with a person wearing

them could make one prone to ill-luck. For pregnant women, it leads to termination of the pregnancy. Therefore, if such a person lives in a community and is known to have been cruel and malicious, he is likely to be accused of witchcraft, including whenever there is a disaster, mysterious disease or death.

Interview session with a respondent provided result that looked similar with that of the discussions.

Informant Interview No. 5

...look, ikpa-I-abor atar and Gbegba are very strong and powerful attire with strong spiritual significance...if anyone put these on...he's become a witch because ordinary people cannot wear them or even touch it...Those who wear them are capable of causing in their especially if their witchcraft is malevolent.

In the discussion, discussants agree that people who are extremely dirty, who do not take their bath normally are vulnerable to be labeled as witches when there is a calamity. It is believed among the Tiv that people who are dirty and pale are witches and that it is witchcraft practice and operations that reflects tangibly on their body. Their looks are irritating as people look at them with contempt.

Key informant interviews show that hygiene and physical appearance is instrumental to witchcraft accusation among the Tiv.

Informant Interview No. 6

...we believe that people who practice witchcraft are been affected by it physically...they look dirty...they don't take their bath often and their skin looks light and pale...

Focus Group Discussions show that lackadaisical people may also be labeled as witches and are very dangerous. These people serve as public relations officers to spiritual world and it is through this carefree attitude that they are able to relate with the targeted people or potential victim to gather information about them.

Key informant interview with a respondent provided the following results.

Informant Interview No. 7

People who are bee-be-bee (carefree attitude) may be accused of witchcraft. They seem

to hide under the pretext of being a sociable person and through that they gather information about their potential victim... We know this kind of people and in the event of death or disaster they became witchcraft suspects or accessory to it...

Discussions also prove that a person who seems to be happy about people's misfortune may be accused of employing witchcraft to stifle people's progress in their socio-economic endeavors. If by any circumstances the person has quarrel with another person and the later suffers misfortune that would affect his socio-economic life, the former is accused of using witchcraft on the latter.

The interview with one of the respondents confirmed the findings provided by the focus group.

Informant Interview No. 8

...some people are jealous because of this, they don't like seeing people progressing socio-economically...they are happy over calamity that befalls people close to them...these kind of people are capable of employing witchcraft to retard people's progress especially if they have misunderstanding, hate or envy them...

The discussions also reveal that among the Tiv, a person can be accused of witchcraft if he had quarrel with another and he said nasty things, with threats. In such cases if the latter then suffers mysterious calamity, then the one who used threatening words with horrible statements will be accused of using witchcraft to harm his adversary.

Key informant interviews found results that seem to agree with the findings generated through Focus Group Discussion.

Informant Interview No. 9

...if you have misunderstanding with your neighbour or relative and you say awful thing to him or say to him, "you will see it", then soon after that he becomes sick, suffer misfortune or die you become a prime suspect as people will think you have fulfilled your threat by harming the person...

Discussion further revealed that witchcraft allegations could be related to issues concerning meat which is considered highly precious

by a Tiv man. Meat such as beef, pork and chicken has far reaching social implications and as such a cow, a pig and a fowl are presented and considered culturally valuable during burial and marriage ceremonies. It is during the sharing of these meats at the ceremonies that witchcraft accusations could manifest. In these scenarios, some parts of the meat are specifically designated to be eaten only by particular individuals within the kinship group. Parts such as the head and heart of a cow are specifically for the eldest person. For chicken, the gizzard is meant only for the eldest person or the head of the family. If, out of any reason, someone who is not supposed to eat the meat decides to eat or take home it home for himself, the elders could become angry for such heresy and the next move by the elders could be to bewitch such a person.

Key informant interview elaborated on this:

Informant Interview No 10

...meat, specifically beef is always at the center of witchcraft allegations among the Tiv...last year at the burial ceremony of my sister, a cow was killed for meat. One of the elders wanted to take more meat especially the head. I stopped him and later, I heard him mentioning my name with some of the elders. I immediately knew that he was up to something so I reported him to the head of my family (extended family). The head said it is good that I've told him about the issue and that he will approach the elder and tell him point blank to stop his plans to bewitch me and that everybody in the community is now aware of his plot...he did that and I was not bewitched... none who have tempered with meat meant for elders during burials or marriage ceremonies have escaped being bewitched except there is extraordinary intervention from a member of members of your kin...

DISCUSSION

The paper argues that factors responsible for witchcraft accusation among the Tiv is to some extent linked to factors that boost struggle for resources and possession of spiritual objects and power for domination and control of man and nature, thus, partly confirming conflict theory. Besides, age is a factor where a person becomes the eldest person in the family and

automatically obtains leadership position which ascribes him to supernatural eyes to things of the dark, making him vulnerable to witchcraft accusations by subordinates. Women at their old age may also be subject to witchcraft accusation due to the belief that a witch is skinny, pale and wretched. This finding collaborates with Briggs (2002) who brought out that age seems to make old people susceptible to accusations of witchcraft as their physical appearance could make them detested and horrible. The Tiv believe that a witch is always pale and old. Wegh (2003) also noted that among the Tiv, physical appearance of old people could make them susceptible to witchcraft allegations and that old cranky men could often be suspected of being witches by others. This could be true; however, another dimension to it is that most old age and pale looks could be attributed to poverty and malnutrition. The factor could also make an old person look horrible, pale with crabby physical appearance. This factor, nevertheless, may not be necessary to involve struggle for resources and power. In such cases, conflict theory may not suit this explanation.

Wealth is also another factor responsible for witchcraft accusation. A wealthy person is suspected of using witchcraft through *imborivungu* to acquire the wealth. Wealth enables a man to dominate others and override important decisions in the family among the Tiv. This does not go down well with others. Such a person is liable to be accused of witchcraft by those who do not have. This finding agrees with Baten and Woitek (2003) who accepted that competition for scarce resources leads to witchcraft accusation. As a result, relatively wealthier members of a community are likely to be labeled as witches by others as they are believed to have used witchcraft to acquire the wealth. At the same time relatively poorer members are also accused of causing misfortune to others who lose their economic status in the community or believe they are supposed to be better off than they actually are. Relatively, well off persons may accuse poorer members of community of practicing witchcraft in an attempt to assume ownership of land, property or even livestock. Wegh (2003) observed that among the Tiv, witchcraft (*tsav*) is manifested through personal success. When it is observed that some men are prospering more than others in farming, hunting and other life endeavours may be accused of using

special power known as *tsav*. It follows that people with *tsav* could achieve double result. They could use *tsav* for their personal progress and simultaneously use it negatively to retard the progress of others. This factor may have elements of struggle for resources and domination. People with *tsav* are observed by others as using it to amass wealth, dominate, suppress and to impoverish others. This may have agreed with proposition by conflict theory that competition for resources and domination is central to the discussion of witchcraft allegations.

A vocal person may be labeled a witch because it is believed that his outspoken ability is enhanced by possession of supernatural powers that makes him to speak without fear. This attribute ensures that he dominates others who tend to be relatively quiet over issues. Such people tend to dominate others in public meetings. Thus people who do not speak out in such occasions may have tendency to be jealous of the vocal person, which may be translated into witchcraft accusations. Ivey and Myers (2008) found something similar. They found that jealousy, rivalry and envy at success may make individuals vulnerable to an accusation of using bewitchment to attain these attributes. Wegh (2003) also observed that boastful persons are also vulnerable to accusations among the Tiv because such people are vocal. This attitude could generate conflict because arrogant people tend to use their out spoken nature to dominate others. This factor again seems to possess some elements of struggle for power and domination as the suppressed people tend to accuse others of using witchcraft to dominate in social gatherings.

Putting on *ikpa-I-abor atar* and *Gbegba* which represents symbol of power precipitates one to witchcraft accusations. To possess and to put on the attire indicates a huge spiritual gap between the bearer and the masses. It is believed that the attire has immense spiritual powers which empower the bearer to control nature, will and destinies of other men. People who come in physical contact with it may be liable to ill-luck and impotence. Hence, those in possession of the outfit are both feared and respected in the physical and spiritual realm. It could therefore, be argued that this is likely to create tension which is reflected in witchcraft accusations. Here also, struggle for power and domination seems to be present. People in possession of this traditional

attire tend to dominate others who in turn could react by labeling them as witches. They are believed to be highly placed within the community of witches and as such position could be manifest from intangible world of witches to concrete world of men. This agrees with Foxcroft (2009) who stressed that witchcraft accusations can be seen to follow the pattern of tension and conflict in societies. This seems to be in congruence with assumptions of the conflict theory that see society as composed of struggle for resources and power between groups.

A jealous and cruel person may be accused of witchcraft, especially when he has misunderstanding with others which is followed by immediate calamity. Ivey and Myers (2008) observed that jealousy, rivalry and envy at success may make individuals vulnerable to an accusation of using bewitchment to attain these attributes while Behlinger (2004) stressed that feelings of envy, hatred, jealousy and fear frequently accompany witchcraft accusations. Jealousy and envy could manifest into quarrels and subsequent use of witchcraft for bewitchment. They could arise out of struggle for resources and control and in this situation it is natural that some will excel while others will not. Competition could result to people acquiring high socio-economic status than others. This has the potential for resentment which could be reflected in jealousy and envy. It is believed among the Tiv that jealousy and envy could be the underlying reason for bewitchment for some people. A jealous person is likely to do anything within his powers to ensure that people around him are not better-off and may use witchcraft to harm them or derail their progress. This is because he may be threatened by socio-economic standing of others. This factor also could not be far from the tenets of conflict theory in regards to witchcraft accusations.

Struggle for meat (beef, pork and chicken) between the Tiv elders and others during burial and marriage ceremonies could be related to witchcraft accusations. The elders are believed to have derived pleasure in eating the reserved parts of meat (heart of cow, gizzard chicken and head cow or pig) they consider most delicious. These parts also could be a symbol of power or authority. Therefore, to compete with the elders for the meat could mean competing with them for power and control within the community. This is where witchcraft allegations come into

play as it is believed that such scenarios have very high possibility employing witchcraft to eliminate or subdue the victim. The elders in this instance may likely be accused of using witchcraft to suppress those who compete with them over the meat or deny them access to the meat. This could be a reflection of ideas of conflict theorists who assert that dominant power (witchcraft in this case) is largely in the hands of those (elders or *ityo*) who own and control the means of life and for that reason they could use this power to suppress those who are a threat to them (Marx 1967). This factor shows competition resources (meat), power and control between *ityo* and others and witchcraft accusation coming out of this struggle.

However, some of the factors seem to be unrelated to struggle for power and domination of nature and mankind. These include personal hygiene habits and physical appearance, such as dirty and pale looking people who are seen as witches. Further, people's beliefs and actions make them vulnerable to witchcraft accusations. Those who often talk about witchcraft and those who consult oracles may be liable to witchcraft accusations. Tiv people may also label people who appear to be sociable and lackadaisical as witches. Such people are said to part-take in the nocturnal activities as informants. Thus, they employ such antics to gather information about their potential victim. In addition, if two people had a quarrel and one threatened the other and then there was misfortune, the person who threatened is accused of using witchcraft to harm his enemy.

CONCLUSION

The paper concludes that factors responsible for witchcraft accusation among the Tiv are to some extent linked to factors that boost struggle for resources and possession of spiritual objects and power for domination and control of man and nature thus, partly confirming conflict theory. However, other factors seem not to be connected to struggle for power and dominance over men and resources but may be determined by people's beliefs, talk and physical appearance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions drawn from the findings, it is recommended that effective and

efficient ways of determining who is a witch needs to be devised. One of such ways could be the use of *swem*. The *swem* is a pot with ashes which represent remains of the Tiv ancestor. It represents justice and is believed to have the power to identify and punish evil men. It is dressed (*wuha*) by *ityo* (patrilineage) who must decide whether to break (*hembe*) *swem* for peculiar motives. When someone is suspected of witchcraft to cause harm, one may be sometimes required to swear to *swem* (*bum swem*) since witchcraft is difficult to prove empirically. Those who are guilty of black witchcraft have been caught (*kor*) by the *swem*. This is one of the most effective and efficient ways of fishing out witches among the Tiv in dated times and should continue to be used by traditionally to draw out suspected witches in modern times if necessary.

Further to that, Witchcraft is part of Tiv culture and all family heads that are the eldest are believed to be witches automatically. Therefore, if someone is suspected to be a witch, the family heads in a kinship group should come together to fish out the witch since witchcraft is a spiritual thing. Oracles or divination may also be consulted by the elders to determine a witch when allegations of witchcraft are leveled against an individual. These methods have been used before and were found to be effective and efficient in most instances.

Another effective way of determining who is a witch by Christians is through consulting powerful men of God who are thought to have power to see in the spirit. Such men are believed to have power to determine and bind witches who may have caused harm to members of their churches or those who consult them. Testimonies abound in regards to many men of God revealing witches that attack their victims and freeing them from the said bondage or attack. As such this way could be explored by those who belong to the Christian faith.

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APPENDIX

List of Key Informants

Zaki Gbagem: He is a second class chief in Shangevya district in Tivland. He has considerable knowledge about Tiv culture and witchcraft.

Mr. Avaan: A lecturer in the Department of Theatre Arts, College of Education, Katsina-Ala.

Adugu Korna: He is a victim of Witchcraft accusation when his two grand children died from drowning in a river.

Zatoonam Utsamera: He is a farmer and one of the elders in Turan district in Tivland.

Pastor Joseph Kighir: He is a pastor with The Reformed Church of Christ (*Nongo-u Kristu I Ser u sha Tar*).

Akpoghon Tyungu: One of the eldest persons in Kpav district in Tivland.

Samuel Oove: An elder from Mbaiwen district in Tivland.

Mbadzungwem Ive: One of the elderst women from Mbayoo district in Tivland.

Akpen Mbaikyaa: One of the eldest persons from Mbayegh district. He has significant knowledge about Tiv culture and witchcraft in Tiv.

Abugh Damkor: He dyes hair for aged people and also an elder with immense knowledge about witchcraft in Tiv.

List of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Members

Iorkyase Aluga
 Akase Ivom
 Ude Aninge
 Terver Tyav
 Azashator Hiifan
 Tongo Ayooso
 Hemen Tyungu
 Alu Shagba
 Ugba Alakali
 Shabem Luper
 Nomivo Taver
 Shagbaor Ge