

**LABELLING OF CHILDREN AS WITCHES
IN EKET, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA**

BY

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CERTIFICATION

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.....
Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the ever TRUE and FAITHFUL GOD whose promises never fail.

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To merely say thank you seems so inadequate to express my heartfelt gratitude to individuals and groups whose invaluable contributions have aided in no small measure to the attainment of this lofty goal.

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ABSTRACT

Witchcraft labelling, which is mostly associated with the aged, and which attracts ostracism and stigmatisation, is a common phenomenon in traditional African societies to address the question of social order. Existing studies have focused on adult witches and approached the discourse from the perspectives of power relations, social control, gender bias and occult economy, paying inadequate attention to the labelling of children as witches and its implications for social order in Eket, Akwa-Ibom state. This study, therefore, examined the conception of witchcraft held by Eket people, the *raison d'être* for child labelling, its consequences on social order and the reactions of the community and organisations in Eket.

The study adopted Taussig's Commodity Fetishism. Ethnography was conducted at two levels: the Eket community and the Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network (CRARN), a centre for labelled children. Participant observation was undertaken at the CRARN centre and selected churches. In-depth interviews were conducted with 95 informants purposively selected from Eket: one paramount ruler, two village heads, two women leaders, 25 men; 25 women; five police officers, five parents of labelled children; five clergy, five members each from the three churches studied; 10 labelled children from among street children. At CRARN, in-depth interviews were conducted with 80 purposively sampled children and four key informants. Data were analysed qualitatively.

In Eket, witchcraft was widely constructed in the form of behavioural deviation with familiars signifying witches. Labelled were individuals, considered to be maliciously evil, covertly jealous and resentful of others' good fortune. Children manifesting these traits were labelled as witches and abandoned to the street. Labelling was linked to profiteering on religious pretext resulting from exorcist activities for which huge sums of money were charged by the clergy in "prayer houses" as attested to by the parents of labelled children. It also latched onto familial instability, economic crisis and serial misfortunes. Labelled children blamed their predicaments on step mother's imbroglio which offered the readiest pretext to get rid of them. Sampled social workers affirmed that many poor parents used labelling to side track parental responsibilities to disavow their children and dispense with them. Street living, resulting from witchcraft labelling, constituted an aberration of order because it exposed them to child trafficking, separation from their families and deviant sub-cultures. The traditional rulers expressed the view that indiscriminate labelling of children defeated the original purpose of using witchcraft labelling for strengthening social order. While the community ostracised and tortured the children, CRARN responded positively by rescuing and rehabilitating them.

Eket child witch labelling, motivated by social, economic and religious reasons, and received differently by the community and CRARN, had exclusively negative effects on labelled children and bore dangerous implications for the Eket community. The extremity and mercenary dimensions of the practice defeated its traditional goal of preserving social order in Eket society.

Therefore, efforts such as those by CRARN should be intensified to rehabilitate the children and reconcile severed child-parent relationships.

Key words: Child witch, Social order, Child labelling, Street children, Eket

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The critical issue in this thesis is the alarming presence of street children at road junctions and on the streets of major cities in Nigeria. This development has drawn concern from all and sundry especially in regard to the fate of these street children. The volume of media reports and scholarly publications on the subject has increased (Cunha, 1992; Black, 1993; Anyuru, 1996; Ebigbo, 1996; Ennew, 1996; Bibers, 1998; Dowran, 2006; Aderinto, 2007 and Akintunde, 2009).

The reason for this is that the phenomenon, particularly as experienced in Eket, Akwa-Ibom state of Nigeria, mirrors the magnitude of this social problem and the concerns about the instability of the social order. Hundreds of children in Eket have been labelled witches by 'men of God' and are subsequently sent out of their homes by their parents unto the streets. This has led to high incidence of street children and has made children objects of public discourse in news and dailies. But there are other issues in the dynamics which have, ironically, a touch of the secularity and are connected with the egoistic and materialistic interest of man. The 'men of God' have worsened the dimension of the soul problem when they labelled these children as witches and claimed to be acting on biblical injunction which says "suffer not a witch to live" (Exodus 22:18). They may consider it their duty to exorcise the spirit of witchcraft from the children but their engagement is not totally altruistic, particularly if the matter is considered 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. Also, he was reported to have charged between ₦2 Million and ₦4 Million for each case of exorcism, depending on the gravity of the problem.

Therefore, the children are on the street not only because they are labelled as witches but also because there is the existence of a culture of materialism pursued at the expense of the vulnerable children. This development stems from the prevailing avaricious religious practices that have engrossed the church and the society at large and that are deeply rooted in the obsession with monetary gain. This has initiated a change/shift in value and resulted in the unwholesome culture of commoditization of

everything, including the human body. Moreover, this now imparts on the way social relations are created and regulated in the society.

Witchcraft among Eket people calls for urgent attention and intervention, because it threatens the lives of individuals as well as the corporate existence of the society, (Ekong, 2001). Thus, efforts are made to exorcise the spirit out of the accused at all cost. But, when this fails, rejection and abandonment become the next option. Those abandoned consequently seek out others who are similarly labelled. Eventually, these children constitute themselves into an association of peers that organize a deviant subculture that is antagonistic to the main culture. Such attitude threatens the fabric of the society and impairs social order. On the street, life for them is rough, particularly for Mary Sunday Udoh (personal fieldwork, 2010), a young girl of about sixteen years old. She had rough scars on her forehead that would easily draw the attention of any curious observer. The scars are the results of the ordeals she passed through, starting with her mother who poured caustic soda on her because she was said to have been responsible for the misfortunes that befell her family. The girl went through her movements across the various sociologically layered and subdivided groups in the society, negotiating her pain. She was eventually labelled a witch at Qua Iboe Church, situated at Oron, and was then thrown out unto the vulnerable and unprotected life of the street to fend for herself. Mary did survive this inhuman treatment but what about others?

One of the churches that have been linked to the child witch saga by the Nigerian press is the Liberty Gospel Church. It is a very popular church in Akwa-Ibom and Cross-River states of Nigeria, with headquarters in Calabar. The church was indicted in the popular documentary titled "Saving the African Witch children". In the documentary, the producers alleged that Liberty films, a franchise of the church, produced a movie in 1999 titled *The End of the Wicked*, which graphically portrayed children as witches (Itauma, 2008; Harrison, 2008 and Foxcroft, 2009). Equally indicting the ministry is a book titled *Unveiling the Mysteries of Witchcraft*, authored by Evangelist Helen Ukpabio, the founder of the church. In the book, she identified signs that characterize children (0-18 years) susceptible to witchcraft spirit. Some of these signs include screaming in the night, lying, stubbornness, possessing unusual boldness, and being destructive, like breaking of plates and glasses as well as other items in the house (Ukpabio, 2003:76). These (the film and the book) raised public consciousness about the existence of child witches. Subsequently, parents started to

observe some of the identified signs in their children/wards and to regard those who manifest these signs as witches to be taken to churches where men of God can pray and drive out the 'evil'.

This was the social climate in which fears of child witches emerged in Akwa-Ibom, only to be heightened by the experiences encountered in the prayer houses through the activities of men of God who capitalized on the charged social atmosphere to offer prophecies that finally indicted the children as witches. The most vulnerable ones of these victims were the domestic helps (a very common syndrome in Akwa-Ibom state, prior to the prohibition of child labour following the adoption of the child's rights acts by the state government) who, in the course of carrying out their domestic chores, might accidentally break utensils or destroy furniture in the house. These mistakes were counted as expressions of witchcraft. These scenarios motivated the choice for this research topic.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The issue of street children is one that was initially seen by scholars as an exclusively urban phenomenon (Ebigbo, 1996; Osemwegie, 1998 and Fakoya, 2009). It has, however, transcended the urban conception as a crime, and through such local nomenclatures as "Watoto wa mitaani" of Kenya, the "Moineaux" of Democratic Republic of Congo, the "Malunde", "Malalapipe", "Sksdukinders" of the Zulu and Afrikans of South Africa (Ennew, 1996) has assumed trans-cultural dimensions. In Nigeria, the "Almajiris" of the North, the "Agaba boys" of Calabar, and the "Area boys" of Lagos are street children who have made the street their permanent abode, and through labelling they tend to see themselves, and to act, in the light of the evaluation and responses of others, as dangerous. The danger inherent in their labelling is that they, as Becker (1974) observes, sooner than later, embarked on a "deviant career"; that is, on a course in which the labelled continue in the act for which he was labelled and graduate into various and varied scales of different, dangerous and disorderly acts. There on the street they create a sub-culture based on street life and devise alternative ways of meeting their basic needs, which in most cases are antisocial. The subculture has so far marred the unity and cordiality that exists in the family as well as in the larger society since, molested by hoodlums and preyed upon by child traffickers, the children-society relations have constituted new risks and uncertainties. Soiled is the image of the community as it turns her posterity

unto the street and eventually loses the connection to its future through a wreckage of potentials.

This study turns its searchlight on street children's situation, for the purpose of developing a better understanding of street condition and, as well, engages in a robust debate on witchcraft in Africa. Literature is, no doubt, replete with several studies on street children from diverse disciplinary backgrounds as Sociology, Psychology, Economics and Education (Oloko, 1989; Ebigbo, 1996; Osemwegie, 1998 and Aderinto, 2007). Although, while they, undoubtedly, investigated the problem of the street child, the anthropological content of their research is little. This anthropological inquiry focuses on the category of street children otherwise called 'child witches' which is yet to be examined in the growing literature on the subject. Literature is vast on witchcraft, but the scholarly discourse on witchcraft as a form of label, and the reticence of the involvement of children in the discourse of witchcraft among anthropologists, necessitates this study. More so, that literary view had been restricted to treating labelling as a sociological and/or criminological concept (Tannenbaum, 1938; Lemert, 1972 and Becker, 1974). In this regard, this study has become necessary as an anthropological investigation of this phenomenon with overt emphasis on culture. The study explores new dynamics in street children (the anthropological discourse of witchcraft labelling) as one primarily interested in investigating why children, rather than the aged, are the targets of witchcraft labelling in Eket. What is critical to this shift in focus is the concept of evil, as a mediating force in materialistic relationships and the driving force of subsequent labelling.

1.3 Research questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- I. Why are children the objects of witchcraft labelling in Eket?
- II. How do Eket people conceive a witch?
- III. Why is the church, rather than any other institution, in the forefront of the labelling act?
- IV. Is sending the labelled unto the street the panacea to the prevailing problem?

1.4 Aim and objectives of the study

The main aim of this study is to examine witchcraft labelling from the standpoint of evil in order to unravel the inherent capacity of labelling that can mar social order.

The specific objectives are to:

- I. Examine the norms and values of Eket community and the extent to which the street children shared or deviated from them.
- II. Examine the concept of a “witch” held by Eket people, in relation to how norms and values are shared among the people.
- III. Investigate the role of the church in detecting child witches, and examine labelling processes within the church and the society, and the implications of exorcising the suspects.
- IV. Investigate the activities of labelled children on the streets and in the remand home and see if there is any difference.

1.5 Scope of the study

This study is limited to the investigation of child witches as it is practised in Eket to designate children abandoned to the street as a result of witchcraft label. The specific focus are male and female children between the ages of 2-18 years (statutory age) who are on the streets as well as in the institutionalized home, the CRARN (Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network) located at Ikot-Afaha in Eket, Akwa-Ibom State. The home shelters and cares for over 70% of the street children in the community; most of them have been labelled and were experiencing street life before they were rehabilitated.

It also covers three churches (prayer houses), which are located at Atabong and Afaha-Uqua quarters in Eket, and one institutionalized home (CRARN). The churches attract large membership, more as a result of being prophesy dispensing churches than as a result of anything else. They have been involved in labelling and a sizable proportion of the children on the street are connected to them individually or collectively. The churches have developed a sub-culture of their own, which is worth investigating and we have done so because they have become the rallying points for individuals and families seeking spiritual help to life’s problems, particularly through prophecies.

Eket is chosen for this study because it gained popularity through the “child witch” saga, particularly in the wake of the broadcast that brought her to the fore of national and international scandals. The broadcast was by a British television channel, of a “C4” documentary titled “Saving the African Witch Children” sponsored by Stepping Stone, a UK based Non Governmental Organization (NGO). The piece featured one Bishop Sunday Williams alias ‘Ulup Aya’ (which translates as “there is nothing under the sun that I cannot do” in the native Mbo dialect) who claimed to have killed one hundred and ten (110) children said to have witchcraft. The same story was reported by Jike Obeta of the Daily Trust of 27th December, 2008 in an article titled “Nigeria Tackling the Witchcraft Question in Akwa Ibom State”. The self-acclaimed Bishop was arrested in May 2009 by the state government and charged to court where he is standing trial for alleged murder. To date, nothing substantial has emerged from the trial to deter others who engage in similar practices.

1.6 Study area

Akwa-Ibom is one of the thirty six states that constitute the nation, Nigeria. It is located in the costal south-southern part of the country as shown in figure 1 below. It lies between latitude 4°32'N and 5°33'N North, and longitudes 7°25' and 8°25' East, within a tropical region marked by two distinct seasons-the rainy and dry seasons. The landmass is 6,900sq km, and is bordered on the East by Cross-River state, on the West by Rivers State, on the north by Abia and on the south by the Atlantic Ocean. The state is made up of 31 L.G.As., and the capital is Uyo. There are three major ethnic groups living in it, namely the Ibibio, Anang, and Oron. The communities, taken together, have a rich culture that is sustained by abundant human and mineral resources. Akwa-Ibom is, in fact, one of the richest oil producing states of Nigeria, and that is why it is also known as ‘the land of promise’, the land where new changes can occur in peoples’ lives.

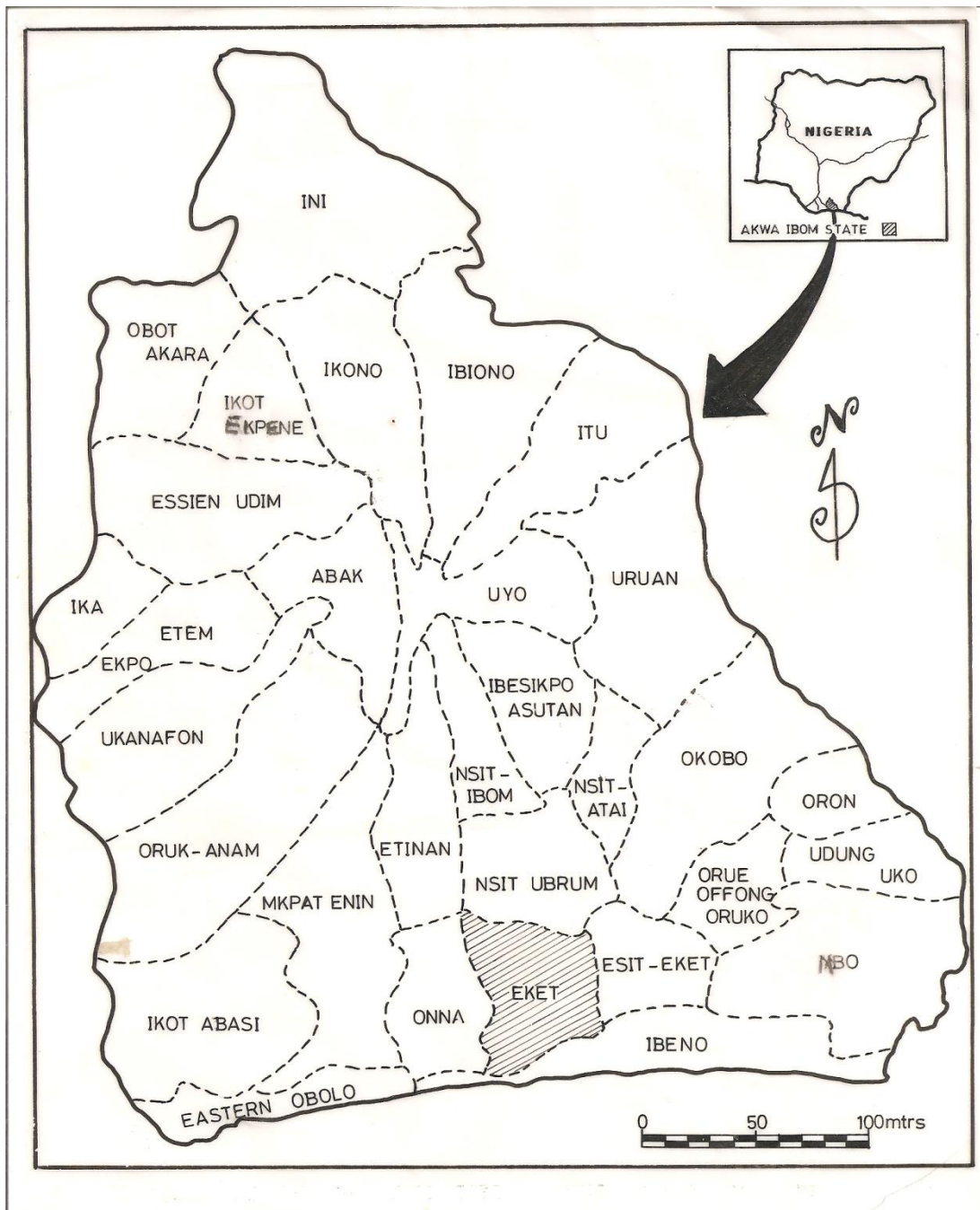


Figure1. Map showing Eket Local Government Area in Akwa-Ibom State (shaded area)
 (Source: Eket local government council 2010)

Eket is a serene and quiet town devoid of the heavy traffic and the boisterous atmosphere of big cities such as Lagos, Kano and Port-Harcourt. It is, however, not lacking in glamour, infrastructure and social amenities that are found in modern cities. There is a good network of roads, constant power supply of electricity, and a relatively dense population making it the second largest town in the state and the headquarters of Eket Local Government Area. It is located in the southern coastal region of the state, bounded in the north by Nsit-Ubium, the south by Ibeno, the west by Onna, and the east by Esit-Eket L.G.As. It lies within latitudes 40N to approximately 5035N in the North and from approximately 7040E in the west to 8030E longitudes in the East, in the hot tropical zone, with heavy rainfall. Eket people have their hometowns in Eket and Esit-Eket L.G.As, which in recent times have become a conurbation engulfing separate villages made up of indigenous ethnic groups.

The origin of Eket people is a matter of historical speculation/assumptions. Some scholars claim they were among the Jews (Israelites) who migrated when Moses led the people out of Egypt (Enodien 2008); others claim that they migrated from Cameroon during the great movement of the Bantu stock in Africa (Eket L.G.A. profile 2001). Whereas Eket claims to be a distinct ethnic nationality from the Ibibio or Efik (Enodien, 2008), most scholars would classify it as part of the major Ibibio ethnic group (Udo, 1983; Offiong, 1991 and Ekong, 2001). The researcher followed the path of those who see it as part of the major Ibibio nation because, culturally, there is no significant difference between the Eket and the Ibibio except for slight phonological differences in language. Eket people speak a dialect of Ibibio language known as Ekid which, realistically, is mutually intelligible to the Ibibios.

The political structure can be rightly described as a tripod, that is, as “abu ite enyi Ekid” (three central beams own Eket), embracing Afaha, Abighi and Atebi. The three are further divided into sub-clans of Okon, Afaha-Eket, Idung-Inan and Ekid-Odiong, among others. Eket is administered by a paramount ruler who, as one at the helm of affairs, oversees the clan heads under his jurisdiction. The paramount ruler and clan heads constitute the administrative council that legislates over the communities. There are village heads at the respective villages; they are subordinate to the clan heads. Each village appoints a chairman and secretary that assist the village head in carrying out his judicial functions. The headship of the various positions is by appointment, but succession rules are mostly undefined. This does lead

to rivalry and jealousy which fuels witchcraft accusations aimed at denigrating rivals among the nominees for appointments. Each family is headed by the eldest man of the extended family. The Ibibio cannot conceive of the nuclear family in isolation from the extended family because they have no single word for the nuclear family (Ekong, 2001). Minor disputations like thefts and quarrels are settled at the family level, but major issues such as the accusation of witchcraft are taken to the village heads to resolve.

The people are patrilineal, unilocal, or patrilocal, with large-knit web of relations comprising extended family. This large-knit web of relations, in some cases, results in conflict (Wilson, 1951) because the Eket, like other Ibibio which Offiong (1991) studied, accept that any departure from socially approved norms should incur the displeasure and vengeance of the ancestors who are believed to watch over the affairs of the living and they may be resistant to the expectations or the sanctions. There is a saying that “Ekpo akpaanyi, Ikpaha Utong” (the dead hears though their eyes may be closed); this, as a belief, influences the daily life of the people.

There are innumerable churches scattered around the city; many of which believe in the Holy Spirit (Edisan spirit,), who some thought inhabit the church altar where prayers and sacrifices are made to God. The pervasive fear of witches has bred deep sense of spiritual insecurity expressed in conversations, and necessitating several precautions to be taken within and around the churches. There is a high patronage of prayer houses, particularly those noted for prophecy and proffering solution to misfortunes, because of the deep-seated sense of insecurity arising from the fear of the known and the unknown. The high patronage most probably accounts for the desire to plant churches in every nook and cranny of the growing city.

Eket people are predominantly farmers, fishermen and hunters. As a coastal town with abundant rainfall, which could make all year round cultivation possible, agriculture is lucrative, but then there is a greater preference for white collar jobs, particularly from the high paying oil companies, and those provided by companies rendering supporting services to the oil industry. This development has, ironically led to increase in unemployment and poverty levels, as a vast number of people is left unemployed by the companies when they fold up. Some of the jobs are, in any case, temporal. Those displaced blame their predicaments on witches rather than employers.

The influx of various professionals and expatriates living and transacting business with the oil company and other affiliated companies located in and around the area has changed the complexion of the city life. The multiplier effect is felt on the socio-political, cultural and economic climates of the community through a commodity economy that is segregated in favour of the oil workers. Incidentally, as inflationary prices set in, living has become relatively expensive and competition for jobs has become intense due to few opportunities available for employment, thus mounting undue pressure on residents who have to struggle daily to meet basic needs. Since societal expectations are high in the new context and definition of success, it is a struggle of the “survival of the fittest”, forcing people to engage in routine tasks in the informal sector, and chasing limited conventional jobs outside the oil industry.

The busiest part of the town is the market/motor park area. It is densely populated. Living and working there are commuters, traders, pedestrians, cyclists, as well as numerous street hawkers. The crowd that throngs the city centre engages in both legitimate and dubious activities. Not unusual, there are hoodlums loitering around. The street children mingle with the crowd around this area in their bid to fend for themselves and, usually, by the evening when the beehive of activity begins to recede, and people retire home, they also retire to a sequestered part of the town such as the sports stadium and the Qua-river hotel premises and take shelter there.

1.7 Significance of the study

To conduct this study has always been my greatest desire, having lived in Eket over the years and come to appreciate the issues of insecurity in everyday life as expressed in conversations and prayers raised in churches. Lately, seeing children abandoned on the streets, brutalized, violated and rejected, on account of their supposed involvement in witchcraft, brought up the passion to study their culture. More so, personal efforts to relocate them from the street to orphanage homes within and outside the state have proved abortive, as they constantly escaped from those homes. Frustrated and discouraged, one resigned to fate, hoping and desiring a better date and way to get to the root of their problem. When the opportunity came for further studies, the researcher considered it wise to undertake the study of these children. The opportunity to come to terms with her feelings came with the consent of her supervisor, who equally recognized it as an issue of significance, and one that requires anthropological enquiry.

The problem of street children, it is important to emphasize, has drawn the concern of academics, government and non-governmental organizations, and the advocates of human rights, such as UNICEF (United Nations Children Emergency Fund), Save the Children's Programme funded by USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development), and others whose aim was to address the problem of abandoned children in order to eradicate the phenomenon or at least bring it to the barest minimum tolerable. This present effort complements the approaches as it explores the culture of labelling from the angle of a flourishing enterprise fostered by pastors, parents and the community leaders willingly or unwillingly. This will be of interest to policy makers and aid policy decisions on children. It will interest advocates of human rights and point to the need to intensify their efforts.

Akwa-Ibom state has adopted and signed into law the child's rights act which criminalizes labelling and stigmatization of children; yet the constant abuse and violation of the rights of children still persists. This present effort will contribute to the ongoing debate on the child rights acts enacted by the government, and move resolutions on the issue towards effective implementation by law enforcement agents and designated government agencies.

It will uncover the ills of labelling both for the children and the society and will underscore the repercussions of violating collective conscience. This will serve as an eye opener to children, parents/guardians and the community at large on the dangers of ignoring the insidious cleavage of the society by such acts.

Its focus on the involvement of children embodies a significant contribution to anthropological discourses on witchcraft. Its application of the concept of labelling to anthropological enquiry is a new dynamics that broadens the horizon of knowledge and enhances intellectual gratification. It will provoke discourse among academics, and be of great interest to the general public.

1.8 Limitations of the study

A major setback for this study is that the subject of witchcraft is one that people are less inclined to speak about with an 'outsider' (non-indigene) due, probably, to fear and also skepticism. The typical Eket/Ibibio is cautious in revealing matters that border on security of life, and witchcraft is conceived as a threat to life. So, their responses to the questions were always with great restraint. More so, the 'child-witch' scandal has tarnished the reputation of the state both nationally and

internationally. Akwa Ibom State might have adopted the Child Rights Acts and placed embargo on child abuse and stigmatization, but the matter, at individual and collective levels, still borders on state security and has to be approached cautiously. Generally, eliciting information from some of the children, particularly those outside CRARN, was quite difficult as they were unwilling to discuss their experiences on the street. Even getting to meet some of them was very difficult, just as it was with meeting with the royal fathers and opinion leaders. Several attempts were made before the researcher could get an appointment with some of them. They all claimed to have busy schedules. Several visits had to be made to them, sometimes without any significant result. The fieldworker did succeed with some though, but in all, the ethnographic study was capital intensive as there was no grant to support the work and it was necessary engaging the services of research assistance and a translator who assisted in transcribing the recorded interview some of which were in the Ekid dialect.

Finally, one must also hint that transcribing and presenting the information verbatim in the native Ekid dialect (the language of the interview) was difficult, as it posed a challenge establishing in written form the proper orthography for Ekid dialect from the formally written Efik/Ibibio languages. This barrier was bridged by the kind assistance of Mr. Udoh, who transcribed the interviews conducted and recorded them in Ekid dialect.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the scholarly works of several intellectuals are explored and digested on the issues of social order, witchcraft, labelling and street children. A theoretical framework is, subsequently, proposed based on Taussig' (1980) work on Commodity Fetishism (Devil Belief Model), in order to give direction to the explanation of data. The review specifically covers the following areas: the concept of street children, categories of street children, factors promoting street children, public perception of street children, labelling, street child as a label, social order, belief in witchcraft, witch hunts and theoretical framework.

2.2 The concept of Street children

Street children are a common sight in most cities of the world. UNDP (United Nations Development Programme, 1992) defines the concept, street children, as 'boys' and 'girls' for whom the "street" (including unoccupied dwellings, wastelands and others) have become their home and, or, source of livelihood and who are inadequately protected or supervised by reasonable adults. To Black (1993) these children are defenseless victims of brutal violence, sexual exploitation, abject neglect, chemical addiction and human rights violations. Dowran (2006) insinuates that they have no home, no identity and no care; the street has become their real homes. The definitions reveal a life in a gloomy situation; yet they do not adequately capture all categories of the experiences on the street. Though a greater part of these children's life is spent on the street, working or selling wares; some are supervised by adults, especially those sent by parents and guardians to work or sell to supplement income (Kaime-Atterhog, 1996 and, Aderinto and Okunola, 1998) and, invariably, enjoy the approval of significant others. More importantly, none of the definitions took cognizance of the reason(s) why the children are on the street. But those in Eket are on the street primarily due to witchcraft label.

2.3 Categories of street children

The literature on street children recognizes that they differ in forms of their relation to the street and in the nature of experiences leading them there (Williams, 1993). Therefore, they can heuristically be categorized into various groups. Scholars

such as Lugalla (1995) and Kaime-Attenhog (1996) classified them into two broad categories of 'on' and 'off' the street; that is, those who live permanently on the streets and earn their 'living' there and those who earn their living on the street but usually return to some form of 'family' unit, where there is some form of supervision and, or, control (Lugalla, 1995). The latter are said to be off the street. USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development, 2004) extended the classification into four sub groups, viz.

1. **Child of the street:** These are children who live and work on the street without family support. Their common place of abode is the street. In Kaime – Atterhog's (1996) work, this category would be the children who have drifted away from their homes or family of orientation and are, sometimes, referred to as "runaways or throwaways".
2. **Child on the street:** Children in this group spend most of their days on the street working or selling but return home at night to sleep. In Aderinto and Okunola's(1998) work, they would be recognized as those who, sometimes, are sent to the street by their parents or guardians; some of them could be there on their own accord.
3. **Part of the street family:** This group live on the sidewalks or in the city square with the rest of their families. They may have been displaced from their residence by poverty, war or natural disaster. They live a nomadic life carrying their possession with them (the Niger people on the streets in Nigeria is an example of this group) as they move around.
4. **Children in institutionalized care:** Those in this group are mainly the abandoned children who were picked from the streets and live in institutionalized homes. Children in the Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network (CRARN centre) located at in Ikot -Afaha, Eket are examples of this category.

Scholars such as (Ennew, 1996) have questioned the adequacy of the categories 'on' and 'off' the street, describing it as a Latin American model and arguing it could be fundamentally incorrect, because it denies the difference in the children' lives and activities. He then posits that it imposes cultural assumptions from one continent to another and assumes homogeneity of culture in the continents. Obviously, there is credibility in the argument as there are cultural dimensions to child upbringing and what is considered dysfunctional in one culture could be a socialization process in another especially in the context of the category 'on' the street

who are sent by parents/guardians. Exposure to the street could be necessary to acquire the skills and resilience needed to fit into the society. The criticisms notwithstanding, these categories shall be used here because they fit the street children under study. More so, the children possess common characteristics and experiences

2.4 Factors promoting street children

The factors leading to children being on the street are multi-dimensional. They vary from place to place, from society to society, from nation to nation. They were created by war and armed conflicts (Loforte, 1994), urban migration resulting in the emergence of the urban poor (Ebigbo, 1996), poverty (Osemwegie, 1998), peer influence (Aderinto, 2007), unemployment (Onyebukeya, 2008), and a weakened family/communal ties (Akintunde, 2009). Some studies have also attempted to trace the emergence of this social problem to issues and problems of civilization. The United Nations Children Emergency Funds (UNICEF, 1985: 4), for instance, observes that “Yesterday, street children were no more than a footnote. Today, street children are a major issue. Tomorrow if present trend continues; they could be blight on urban civilization”.

The envisaged tomorrow is already here with the alarming rate of increase in the number of Nigerian children parading the streets. They might have been rare in Nigeria in the 1980s, (Fakoya, 2009), but their presence has become visibly noticeable by the early 1990s with the downturn in the national economy. By 1999, they were reported in over a hundred street locations in Lagos alone (Fakoya, 2009). This could have been associated with the infrastructural development (Ebigbo, 1989) in the cities leading to mass urban migration in search of greener pastures. The side effect was the emergence of the urban poor, who devised alternative means of coping with the challenges of urban life. One of such means is sending children/wards to the street to work or hawk wares to augment family inadequate income. Omuabar (1993) has stated that when this happens many households send their children to work rather than school in order to supplement income. Oluwatayo (2004) also noted that sending children to work enables the poor to spread the effects of income shock through time, and also hinted that many children in the streets just have to do this to survive. This survival strategy exposes children unduly because street life is precarious and unpredictable. More so, that the street

children we are concerned with are not on the street as a result of poverty or challenges of urban life, but are thrown out by parents as a result of witchcraft labelling.

2.5 Public perception of street children

In the perception of the Nigerian public, street children are regarded negatively, as nuisance, troublemakers, and criminals. Their sight tends to evoke unpleasant feelings that inform the responses of the public toward them. Public responses to them follow two trajectories: these children are either “helpless victims of circumstance” or are “criminals-in-the making” (Swart, 1996). The latter perception is that which incites acts of violence against them the most, and it stems from the fear and feeling of their being a threat, as Dallape and Teferi (1989) noted. Yet, to many, they are in the streets by circumstances beyond their control, particularly as escape route from the brutality, torture and hostility of family and community members who want to exonerate themselves from the stigma associated with witchcraft label. The fact is that some of the children opt for street life as a last resort, when no other option is open to them. Hence, Anyuru (1996) has argued that if children were given the basic necessities of life (such as food, clothing, protection, security, and access to good education, supportive and caring parents) only a few would choose to live or work on the street.

2.6 Labelling theory

The literary approaches to labelling take different twists and turns. The labelling theorists would argue that the critical issue is the manner or form by which the individuals are labelled.

For them labelling is a process by which individuals are marked or ‘tagged’ as deviant. Becker (1974) has, in fact, argued that social group creates deviance by making rules whose infraction constitute deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. This holds true for Eket street children who are labelled as witches; consequently, they are rejected as undesirable and social outcast pitched against family. They are stigmatized, ostracized, abandoned and alienated from the wider society. This treatment, in Becker’s view, denies the labelled the ordinary means of carrying on with the routines of everyday life open to most people, and because of this, they have to develop illegitimate routes of making

ends meet. Street life becomes one available option, with its attendant dangers such as drug addiction, prostitution, armed robbery, violence, among others. Therefore, on the public space, they stand to be rejected and can/do suffer isolation and exclusion from members of the community because witchcraft is perceived as a threat to the collective order of the society. In response to the bias and the demeanor of the society towards them, they become hostile and disrespectful. This further proves community assertion about them as evil and increases the community's negativism

Whereas, we all engage in one form of deviancy or the other, what Lemert (1951) termed primary deviance; that is, behavioural deviations and acts that violate social norms but go unnoticed by the agents of social control. Truancy for instance is common among children; even the 'good' ones have their incongruities but only the "bad" ones are singled out for whatever reasons are personal and may be consistent or inconsistent with the general will. Like Siegel et-al (2003) rightly observed, labelling leads to stigmatization and encourages the labelled to accept the negative personal identity, setting up conditions conducive to secondary deviance (deviance individuals adopt in response to the reactions of others).

Labelling theorists hold that deviance depends on which rule the society chooses to enforce, in which situation and with respect to which people. This buttresses the labelling of children by men of God who by virtue of their offices/positions as 'oracles', can, and do impose definitions of morality on people. Since labelling expresses power structure in the society as Giddens (2006) observes, they use their privileged positions to assert their opinions on street children, allocating to them a position in the dislocation in the society that can hamper their social mobility. Therefore, as Harris (1975) affirms, their use of witchcraft label is akin to how other social instruments are used by the privileged and powerful classes against the poor and the weak, serving specifically for domination and the creation of wealth. It is ironic that defenseless children would be the greatest victims of witchcraft accusations. Of course, it is the weak, defenseless and vulnerable that are mostly labeled; little wonder, children -dependent and defenseless- are targeted in Eket.

2.7 Street child as a label

It is pertinent to state that the concept, street children, itself is a form of label. The label "street child" focuses public attention to the children as disobedient and

delinquent. As Dallape (1989:283) argues, “the term may be inappropriate, offensive and gives a distorted message”. Bibars has, equally, stressed that the term can and do have a very negative connotation, particularly the phrase, ‘the street’ which, in his view, correlates with crime, vagrancy and violence (Bibars, 1998:201). Most scholars of the labelling school would agree that the term is socially inappropriate, stigmatizing and offensive and that it carries a negative public image and paints a picture of a character that can be easily drawn to criminal activities. There may be shades of contextual differences, of course, in the images of the deviant. Hence, as Anyuru (1996) noted, in Ethiopia the term Doorye (street child) means one who belongs to the wilderness and is untamed, while in Uganda Muyaaye (street child) is used to mean out of control. The term, when translated into Igbo (Delta-Igbo), means Nwa-ilo, implying a ‘wayward’, ‘loose’, ‘lawless’, out of control or prodigal child. None of these definitions give any sufficient clue as to why the children are in the street in the first instance, though the situation in Eket is rather illuminating on the causation. The consensus among scholars is that labels are evaluations of the person, as a negative presence or influence, as one that should be rejected as member of a society or social group.

2.8 Social order

There are many literary explanations of social order, including the Functionalist and Marxists theoretical perspectives. They variously focus on normative and materialist explanations of social order, which are, in some regards, important to the perspective of this work. Unlike the Functionalists, the Marxists offer a materialist explanation of social order. Karl Marx, as chief proponent of this perspective, maintains that economic structure or political relations underpin the construction of social order. In his view, inequality in the distribution of resources accounts for conflict, and the existence of conflict implies that social order is vicariously and precariously maintained. In Marx’ views cohesion is maintained through economic compulsion, political and legal coercion and bureaucratic order.

Functionalists such as Durkheim (1947) and Parsons (1951) on their part, relate social order to regular and ordered pattern of relationships. They hold the view that society is a complex system composed of many structures, each structure functioning to maintain the whole. They believe that order and stability resulting from the cooperation of the various institutions or structures are indispensable for the

maintenance and normal functioning of the society and its constituent parts. They opine that there are functional prerequisites that must be met by a system, one of which is social order.

Durkheim (1947) noted that social order is most important of all functional prerequisites. He observed the homo duplex nature of individuals and argued that human beings are egoistic and selfish. To curtail these attributes and enhance peaceful co-existence, he coined 'collective conscience' as that which summarizes common belief and sentiment as basis of social order. He argued that collective conscience restrains individuals from acting in terms contradictory to the requirement of the society. He believes that consensus on fundamental moral values are necessary for social solidarity because it binds individuals together to form an integrated unit. However, Mennell (1974) disagreed with Durkheim, stating that consensus may not necessarily lead to order, that order could be maintained when there is no commitment to core values. He believes that commitment to unequal rewards leads to cohesion because if individuals all commit to equal rewards, failure in attainment could result in disorder. He further stressed that consensus on norms such as malevolence and resort to witchcraft is hardly conducive to social solidarity and integration because it could result in competition which could lead to disorder. Suffice it to say, however, that societies hardly agree on malevolent norms. Norms that are mostly accepted are norms that are right, just and proper. So, the issue of disorder based on malevolent norm is illusive.

Parsons' (1951) idea is that commitment to common values bound by what he called "system of regulatory normative rule" is the basis of social order in society. He pointed out that if members of society are committed to same values, they will tend to share common identity, which can provide the basis for unity and cooperation. He added that when values are institutionalized and behaviour is structured in terms of them, social equilibrium is attained. Parsons' notion of social equilibrium is questionable because social order, however indispensable it is, is not constant; it could be threatened by a world in a state of flux, which, as Uchendu (1956) puts it, is in a state of moving equilibrium. Equilibrium could be threatened or disturbed by natural and social calamities which include drought, epidemic, famine, diseases, death or evil (Uchendu, 1956:).

But there is the emic perspective also. The Ibibio resort to some kind of explanation for their social disasters through the medium of divination. They know

from life experiences that disequilibrium in society is not only caused by spirits but also by individuals living in society. Whereas their social relationships inevitably entail certain amount of friction, which may be as a result of breach of moral codes or norms and values, perpetrators of acts that violate societal norms are probed for causes of their actions. Assessment of human nature and behaviours that are at variance with societal expectation such as the egoistic, whose behaviours subvert social order, is constantly going on (Offiong, 1991). We shall offer more explanation for this in 2.5 of this chapter.

2.9 The belief in witchcraft

Witchcraft is commonly conceived as evil, but the sources of evil vary from one society to another, and very much so on the template of personal and cultural perceptions. Russell (1977:259) puts it thus: “each person interprets the experience of evil in terms of his own personal and cultural predilections so that considerable varieties exist in the content of reported perceptions”. Some people ascribe evil to the devil and perceive witchcraft as demonic. Others, from a religious perspective, see evil’s origin in human nature (Murray, 1975; Ray, 1976). To the Ibibio, evil can be linked to fate. But they similarly recognize other sources of evil which originate in human’s wicked intentions, bitterness, slander, hatred, sorcery, taboo and filial impiety or disregard for ancestors (Messenger, 1959 and Offiong, 1991). Witchcraft is, however, a more convenient idiom through which evil is expressed, probably because, as Haviland (2002) opines, witchcraft, other than other explanations of misfortunes, elicits more sympathy and more satisfying explanation of the causes of inexplicable developments.

The western world may, however, consider belief in witchcraft as atavistic, but not in Africa where the belief holds sway even in contemporary society. As a cultural factor, witchcraft responds to changes in the social system that upsets and destabilizes social order. Such changes include political instability, economic regression, health challenges, family breakups, individual/ systemic failures and natural disasters, etc., all of which are usually explained by the people through the idiom of witchcraft. Even formal education, modernization and scientific and technological advancement have not deterred the belief that witchcraft is behind negative developments. Parrinder, an anthropologist and religion scholar, who studied many African societies, stated thus: “There is little sign of decrease in witchcraft belief with increasing education”

(Parrinder, 1963:128-129). He is right. The intensity of public discourse on the issue increases by the day and centres on whether witchcraft is a reality on the one hand, or it is a fallacy based on superstitious belief, on the other hand. He has this to say on belief in witchcraft, "It will be our conclusion that the belief in witchcraft is a tragic error, a false explanation of the ills of life, and one that has only led to cruel and baseless oppression in which countless innocent people has suffered" (Parrinder 1963:16).

His view is that belief in witchcraft is superstitious, erroneously stemming from ignorance and falsehood, which suspects are unduly persecuted for. A similar view was expressed by Rattray (1954:34) who conceived belief in witchcraft as "foolish and childish" yet admitted it is real in Africa where such beliefs persist in spite of civilization. This line of thought, which considers witchcraft belief as foolish and a product of the infantile mind, finds support in psycho-analytical theory which posits that stress could lead to hallucinations that may cause the mind to wonder and the patient to claim unimaginable things. The basis of this argument is that, there is no empirical proof to support alleged testimonies of confessed witches or there is no evidence to authenticate the claims of victims of witchcraft attacks. Though this view could be accepted medically and psychologically, it is alien and unacceptable to African cosmology. Most Africans (scholars inclusive) believe in the existence of witches, and use their malevolent act as bases to explain the uncanny. For instance, Idowu (1970:9) believes witches exist and this is evident in the following statement "I will assert categorically that there are witches in Africa, that they are as real as murderers, poisoners and other categories of evil workers, overt or surreptitious". Idowu claims that witches are as real as murderers and poisoners. This could be rebutted on the grounds that, unlike witchcraft which is mostly believed to be psychic, as Evans-Pritchard (1973) stated, murderers and other categories of evil workers can be empirically proved, as there are physical evidence to prove such cases, but witchcraft is not. His insistence on the reality of witches reveals the strong belief in the existence of witches.

The pre-Christian cultures of Greece, Rome and Iceland also believed in the existence of witches (Davidson, 1973; Ankarloo and Clark, 1999), and so do religious schools which also hold that witchcraft is the survival of classical paganism; that it is a displaced religion that has lingered on. Thus, witches are seen as human replica of

the devil and one that works collaboratively with him to perpetuate crisis in society. Murray's (1975) view belongs to this school; he says:

It is impossible to understand the witch cult without first understanding the position of the chief personage of the cult. He was known to contemporary judges and recorders as the Devil, and was called by them Satan, Lucifer, Beelzebub, the foul friend, the enemy of salvation, and similar names appropriate to the principal of evil, the Devil of the scripture, with whom they identified him.

(Murray, 1975: 28)

Murray's stand upholds the biblical view which incriminates the devil as the originator of evil. Indeed, every malevolent act is ascribed to him, and men who perpetuate mischievous deeds are believed to have been inspired by him or are in league with him to perpetuate devilry acts. Belief in witchcraft is so strong that Wilson (1959) remarked that to study African religion without witchcraft would be like studying Christianity without Satan. To support this, some scholars, such as Niehaus (2002) and Kohnert (2003) suggest that African belief systems, including the belief in witchcraft, should be considered as an integral part of African culture. Though this may be contested, it is a view that represents a shift in the discourse of witchcraft, and constitutes a significant turn from religion into anthropology.

Anthropological studies do situate witchcraft in various assumptions and propositions of culture and development. It has, thus, been seen as manifestations of political and economic realities of the postcolonial state development (Shaw, 1997; Rowlands and Warnier, 1998). It is conceived as reflections on state violence and political power relations (Briggs, 1996), basis of gender bias and competition for dominance (Federicil, 2008) and indicator of capital development and management of resources (Apter, 1993; Austen, 1993 and Duckers-Brown 1993). In addition, witchcraft surfaces in the discourse of the financing of politicians and businessmen (Geschiere, 1997 and Neihasmus, 1998), as an issue in intellectual exchange on the disparities between urban literates and illiterate rural dwellers (Bastian, 1993), as a cause of intergenerational antagonism (Bever, 2000) and as the originator of occult economy (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999; Ferme, 2001 and Kohnert 2003). Generally, it encapsulates the problems inherent in labour migration and capitalist endeavours (Auslander, 1993 and Weiss, 1996). To harmonize these studies, we shall recapitulate the witchcraft discourses of the various perspectives and schools of thought.

But what for now becomes apparent is that the Functionalists' approach to witchcraft studies specifies witchcraft as a means of social control (Gluckman, 1965); as one that helps to maintain social order, because the fear of accusation gear men to conform to societal norms (Offiong, 1991). Others believe it provides cogent explanations for the mishaps that befall individuals. Marwick (1970) shares this view, noting that

...the witch system gives a channel into which blame can be turned more conveniently. The power of the witch is conceived as something that can put a spoke into any wheel; this helps one to assume that, but for the witch, the wheels would always be turning smoothly. (Marwick,1970:53)

Witchcraft offers some people cogent rationale for exonerating themselves or the society from failures, by deflecting the blame on others. It is man's effort to understand and explain the mysteries of life, and witchcraft provides a ready theory of causation and of misfortune (Nadal, 1952; Crawford, 1967; Evans-Pritchard, 1973; Mair, 1976 and Haviland, 2002). Those who highlight the dysfunctional aspect of witchcraft view it differently. It could be to release tension among kins (Turner, 1957); such tensions as those that could have disrupted the normal working of the society, or control the animosities that derive from the exercise of power and the distribution of benefits of labour among classes (Douglas, 1963). Harris (1975) asserts that it could serve as a smokescreen of the privileged against the poor, expressing disparities in power relations and class consciousness. Obviously, there is a dichotomy between the Functionalists', while some conceive witchcraft labelling as requisite for maintenance of social order, others pitch witchcraft as antithetical to social order.

The Feminists perceive witchcraft as a reflection on gender inequalities. It is construed as an oppositional instrument of the domineering male folks against the defenseless women (particularly the aged) who are often regarded as witches. They see it as a projection of the fear and guilt of men unto subjugated women folk, possibly to destroy gerontocracy and its power. Women are mostly labelled because they constitute threat to their male competitors who respond to the loss of their economic security and masculine identity by discrediting the women they believed to be competing with them (Federicil, 2008). Women are castigated because they constitute the marginal and dependent members of the community; they are the ones that arouse feeling of hostility and guilt (Macfarlane, 1970 and Thomas, 1971).

Gerrett (1977) has coined what he called the notion of 'female space', otherwise called 'domestic authority' by Rosaldo, (1974), to explain why women are exploited. By using the dual framework of male/female, domestic/public authority, and informal/formal relationships as the underlying factor of the expression of hostility and alienation within social space (see Gottlieb, 1989; Auslander, 1993 and Bastian, 1993), Rosaldo (1974) sheds more light on why male witches are less ill-treated. He reasoned that it is due to men's public position, which seems to accept the use of witchcraft to bolster 'legitimate' male authority and construct social order in their favour. Apparently, as expressed by Moore (1986), those who construct meaning for social contexts can mask the true nature of social relations/events to further their selfish interest under the disguise of culturally assigned patriarchy that legitimizes male dominance and control. This perspective, though interesting and useful, is lopsided as it presumptuously portrays witchcraft labelling as stemming solely from the male folks, thus undermining the role women play in witchcraft accusations. Hence, it is incapable of explaining the situation under study as witchcraft label transcends sex distinctions among Eket people of Akwa-Ibom state.

Modernists, like feminists, relate witchcraft to dimensions of power and politics. Witchcraft in this regard expresses the fear and obsession of new forms of wealth and power. The modernists' contention is that witchcraft is not solely the result of economic crisis but an outcome of inequality heightened by such modern power elements as political administrative offices. In Cameroon, for instance, those who feel threatened by poorer members of the family rely more on the state court to tackle the problem of witchcraft rather than local mechanism. They see witchcraft as a weapon of antagonism with which the poor counter the inequality and selectivity in opportunities, which they have been deprived of. The protestations thus become a resistance to the advancement, enrichment and sustenance of the wealth the rich have illegitimately or corruptly accumulated. It is equally a rejection of traditional approaches to solving witchcraft problems. To them, witchcraft has become a mystical weapon against the wealth of the rich (Ellis, 2000); it has to stop or arrest the continuity of extant order. Modernists' view does not explain the situation here, because witchcraft belief is not a modern phenomenon among Eket people and class division is immaterial as accusation is not directed towards opposing classes.

The economic school hinges its discourse on the dynamics of a cash economy, for instance, the development of cocoa industry, and the subsequent creation of class

division (Dovlo, 2007). Among the Yoruba, Apter (1993) noted that the 1950 witch finding movements in Yoruba land was triggered by the rise in the price of cocoa in the world market. Ogembo's (2006) study, in the same tradition, revealed that in Kenya, witchcraft labelling escalated at the instance of an economic hardship that led to mass unemployment, currency devaluation and culminated in a state of despair and hopelessness. For Danfulani (2007), economic dimension, when traced to economic policies such as currency devaluation, structural adjustment programme and debt crisis in many African communities, can and do exacerbate witchcraft labelling. Indeed, changes in international policies on local and global markets usually transform local economics and transactions and create disparities in opportunities which then leave room for suspicion and resentment on the part of the impoverished that are called witches. What usually follows in poor developing economy, as Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) noted, is intense traffic in body parts and organs for money rituals or transplant, and a heightened fear about witches. In this wise, witchcraft may be a response to what Comaroff and Comaroff (1999:281-285) has termed the "commodification of life"; that is, an attempt to turn human bodies into means of capital accumulation. Though there are elements of economic gains flavouring the labelling of children as witches, economic factors are insufficient in explaining witchcraft issues in Eket, as witchcraft belief predates all economic policies presumed to have heightened the fear of witches. Therefore, in addition to economic factors, we have to investigate other possible factors responsible for witchcraft labelling in Eket.

2.10 The perception of witchcraft in Ibibio literature

The concept of chance or accident is rare in Ibibio discourse of misfortune, so witchcraft subsumes that which is planned and intentional caused by a living object or a spirit. Were it to be a living object, such an object possesses a physical substance that exists in its body. The witch substance, according to Offiong (1991:83), "is a special concoction embodying red, white and black thread along with needles and other ingredients which the witch swallows". This substance gives them the power to carry out their malevolent acts. Whether this is believable or not, the universality of this characterization is in doubt. This is more so as it is believed that the substance cannot be removed by autopsy. Rather, it can be removed only by native doctors, spiritualists or men of God through supernatural power or through the ordeal of

consuming the Esere beans (a poisonous bean) in order to neutralize the substance or instigate the witch to vomit it (Offiong, 1991 and Ekong, 2001). When the ordeal was banned by the colonial administrators, however, most Ibibio in contemporary times have resorted to patronizing 'men of God' who are believed to be endowed with spiritual powers to detect witches and also exorcise them. The Ibibio are not alone in seeking spiritual help in matters relating to witchcraft, Paul Orude of Daily Sun Newspaper of 17th September, 2009 reported that 140 child witches secured deliverance from a pastor in Bauchi state. This new form of exorcism has led to the proliferation of churches and, subsequently, the multiplication of pastors/prophets whose modus operandi is witchcraft labelling. The pastors and the spiritualists, deal with the belief that whatever stays inside the witches can be flushed out through exorcism/administration of some concoctions. Proceeding with a cosmology of darkness in the assumption that witches travel to their covens at night, and the night correlates with darkness, because evil is associated with darkness, they engage witchcraft as a dark force; that is, a force of darkness that can be cleared by the light of God.

There is no sex differentiation in witchcraft accusation among the Ibibio. Men and women are believed to possess the witchcraft spirit. In the evolving trend, however, an intergenerational antagonism is expressed against children (child-witches). This is not a universal practice. The Tonga people of Zambia never suspect a child nor label them as witches because they believe children do not have the resources to obtain witchcraft nor the magic it requires to practice the craft. Among the Ibibio where such perception of, and approach to, children is common, the reasons for doing so are not entirely clear. Are children agents of darkness? How do they embody darkness? When do they become agents of darkness, if they actually are? Significantly, the Ibibio do not believe witchcraft is hereditary, rather, it is acquired by bewitchment of one already possessed with the spirit either through food or drink. Could children have been afflicted by fellow children or by the adults?

2.11 Witch-hunts

The question of how witchcraft can be curtailed has become a major issue of everyday life in communities where such a problem is rife. Cases of witch hunting abound in ancient and contemporary times where alleged witches have been subjected to humiliating experiences and frightening exorcisms. Unlike the European witch-

hunt which could be properly dated, it is difficult to point to a specific origin of African witch-hunt though it is presumably an age-old practice that had been with the people from time immemorial (Olukunle, 1980). Oster's (2004) view is that Mallecus Malleficarum, a book published in 1484, was probably more valid in authenticating their belief in witchcraft as it indicated how suspects should be questioned and treated. Witchcraft in biblical view is to be seen as demonic and evil, hence Christianity's tireless effort to eliminate it through persecution and ostracism. This is what might have prompted the European witch craze of the 16th-17th centuries, which was characterized by intense persecution of alleged witches and resulted in the murder of an estimated 500,000 people convicted and burnt to death (Harris, 1975). Here, in Nigeria, the persecution going on in Akwa-Ibom is, in some ways, reminiscent of the European witch craze since its focus is the vulnerable and marginal group such as children, just as women were the target of the European witch craze. And as with the European witch craze, the hunting is linked to the church, to pastors, such as the priests in the European witch craze, as the arrow heads of witchcraft accusations.

In Africa, and in Nigeria specifically, a movement of the Ndako Gboya group of witch hunters operated among the Nupe people around 1921, identifying suspected witches who were mainly women. They were made to pass through an ordeal which involved digging the ground with bare hands until they began to bleed, and this was regarded as a sign of guilt. The society was banned in Nupe province in 1921 (Parrinder, 1963). In 1934, another movement of witch hunters called Bamucapi emerged in Congo. This time, both men and women were suspected to be witches. Those suspected were made to pass behind the witch hunters, who identified alleged witches with the help of a small mirror. Once identified, they were given medicine (a reddish soapy powder mixed with water) meant to cure them. Such witches were urged to give up their horns (tools of witchcraft). The hunters equally sold charms that warded off evils and attracted favours at expensive rates to interested members of the communities they visited (Parrinder, 1963 and Offiong, 1991).

Another group, the Atinga group, emerged in Ghana between 1947-51 and extended its tentacles into the western provinces of Nigeria where it raided some towns including Ilaro and Lalupon. The group involved some members of the group dancing and in the process going into trance, and then claiming to have the power to identify witches while in such a mood. Suspects were given concoctions (a mixture of

blood, water and kola nuts) to drink (Parrinder, 1963). This concoction was believed to 'cleanse' the witches. Their activity was abolished by an order-in-council in 1951 (Parrinder, 1963).

Offiong (1991) reported the case of Edem Edet Akpan (alias Akpan Ekwong) who carried out an anti-witchcraft crusade between 1978 and 1979 in many parts of Ibibio land, in Akwa-Ibom state. He was going round the villages in collaboration with some youths (Nka Ukpotio) to identify witches. The identification process involved assembling members of the villages at the market place or town hall where they went around them detecting suspected witches by supernatural power. Those suspected were given palm fronds (ekpin) and their hands and legs tied together before being tortured until they confess their alleged involvement. Those who confessed after being detected were fined as stipulated by Nka Ukpotio (youths from the respective villages that assist Akpan Ekwong in the exercise). Their ransom included money, drinks, yam tubers, goats, hen, etc. Those who held on to their innocence were tortured to death or until they were maimed (Offiong, 1991). Like most witch-hunting expeditions, Akpan Ekwong's exercise was turned into a money making venture not only for the initiator, who benefited financially by selling anti-witchcraft medicine, and the honorarium he received from the villages he visited, but also for the shanghai opportunists (Nka Ukpotio) who capitalized on the exercise to demand their share from wealthy men under the threat of witchcraft label. Those who obliged were spared, while those who declined their request were indicted and labelled as witches. Akpan Ekwong's crusade was not the only witch finding exercise carried out in Akwa-Ibom state. There was another that Ekong (2001) reported which took place in the olden days, among the riverian Ibibio (Eket area). During that time, anyone who was accused of witchcraft was called out to the public and given esere beans (*physostigma venenosum*) to prove their innocence. The poisonous bean was believed to be lethal only to witches and wizards (see Arrowsmith, 1958).

In 2001, the researcher was an eye witness to witch-hunting at Afaha-Uqua Obok-Idem in Eket where aggrieved youths, incensed by high level of unemployment and perceived exclusion of the indigenes from the wealth of the resources of the 'oil city', blamed their predicaments on the handiwork of witches. Aged men and women were dragged out literally nude into the village square and were fed with the bread of affliction by the youths who urged them to confess their involvements in the act. Though no death was recorded at Afaha-Uqua Obok-Idem, lives were lost at the

neighbouring Effoi and Esiru-Urua communities where similar hunts were carried out. This movement was, however, short lived due to police intervention, but that did not diminish the belief in witchcraft nor eliminate its fear among the people. Rather, it became the pedestal for contemporary child witch saga as most people resorted to spiritual-help-seeking following the ban on the activities of Nka ukpotio. Prayer houses and 'men/women of God' became the refuge for people seeking solutions to life threatening situations, which include the scourge of witchcraft.

Media reports abound of recent violence against and killings of suspected witches in other parts of Nigeria and African countries. In November 2004, for instance, the youths of Isu, in Onitcha Local Government Area of Ebonyi state, killed many people suspected to be witches and wizards, in their attempt to rid the community of what they called "enemies of progress". The same year, Ozalla in Edo state undertook their eradication exercise. Similar cases were reported in Idumu-Ogo and Onitcha-Ugbo both in Aniocha North Local Government Areas of Delta state in 1998 and 2005 respectively (Madike, 2008).

Niehaus (2001) stated that in South Africa's Northern Province, over 400 witches have been killed since 1985. In 1997, accused witches in Zambia were driven out of their villages, expropriated of their possessions and in some cases tortured or even killed (Heinfelaar, 2007). In Kenya, 11 people were reported to have been murdered due to witchcraft accusations (Ogembo, 2006), and in Ghana the persecution of witches was so intense that 'witch camps' were created to exile the alleged witches after they were expelled from their villages (Dovlo, 2007 and Bera, 2005). Studies have also documented witch hunts in Bihar-India, (EWD, 2002). In Andean region of South America, Von Cott (2000) reported that the indigenous communities execute or expel suspected witches.

The witch finding exercise in recent times appears to have a strong link with the activities of the church. Media reports and studies reveal that thousands of children are labelled witches in Akwa Ibom state. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, there was another report where Save the Children Report lamented the high incidence of children on the streets of Kinshasha as a result of witchcraft label by revivalists' sect. It is worthy of note that same motives (the desire to combat evil) drive the exercise, whether by the church/prayer houses or by local/traditional witch hunters. The various witch expeditions had a wide spectrum of economic benefit to explore, though latent in some cases. These are in the forms of rewards for witch

hunters who 'instrumentalize' the exercise for their benefits (Harris, 1975). During the European witch-hunt, the property of the alleged witches was confiscated and converted to the benefits of the priest and rulers that initiated the hunt. Same applies to the various witch-hunts; all had financial or material benefits that they generated for witch-hunters and their associates through the fines that were placed on the victims or the various medicines sold to avert witchcraft attacks. In each hunt, fines were imposed and such fines were sources of wealth to the hunters. For instance, the Ndako gboya group among the Nupe turned theirs to instruments of 'ruthless exploitation' in favour of the group as they derived economic success from witch-hunting (Parrinder, 1963). Offiong (1991) also noted that Akpan Ekwong received tips from those who consulted him. Colson (2000) noted that *Zambian* witch finders made wealth as the accused were required to give plough oxen and other working equipment to witch finders and their team as charges for their cleansing. Similarly, Akwa-Ibom child witch saga was said to be "minting naira" notes for 'men/women of God' who found exorcism an easy way of making money (Olusesi, 2008). Same was reported by Tonda (2002), who noted that the venture extends the resources of the hunters as well as the income of men of God who engaged in the exercise.

It is worthy of note that the various witch-hunts have had great popular appeal and strong backing by communities. The legitimacy or not of the exercise, in emic view, accelerated the support and reaction the witch hunters enjoyed while it lasted. For instance, Parrinder (1963) reported that there was mass protest in western Nigeria following the official ban of the activities of the Atinga group. Similar objections were raised by the Ibibio when Akpan Ekwong was arrested. It was so cherished that some lawyers in the communities were said to have volunteered to defend their client at no cost (Offiong, 1991). Likewise, today, churches that engage in exorcism attract large crowds in terms of membership, apparently because large offerings, in addition to the large sums of money they charge for exorcism, accrue from the exercise. The willingness of the people to see to the eradication of witches paradoxically, also, reinforces the belief in witchcraft and buttresses the view that witchcraft is a complex phenomenon.

2.12 Theoretical framework

Some scholars assume that socio-psychological dimensions and normative values underpin the interpretation of evil, yet others relate evil to social structure and

social relations in the society (Mair, 1976 and Offiong,1991). Douglas' (1982) analysis of the Mbuti pygmies and Hadza hunters of Tanzania have revealed that evil inheres in and is determined by the nature of the social structures in societies. She argued that the more social relations become weak and confused the more intense the idea of evil. To her, witchcraft accusations are rampant in societies where internal relations are unsystematic and roles are ambiguous or are undefined or difficult to perform. Accusations are used in such societies to denigrate rivals in competition for leadership and to exploit such ambiguities and, or, organize them as weapon of separation and, or, expulsion. She stressed that when there is conflict of roles there is weak authority to insist on conformity, and suggested that the panacea for witchcraft dominated cosmology is to change the nature of social organization because the sense of evil is weakened as social control is strengthened. Douglas' model explains witchcraft practice in societies where roles are undefined or the defined ones are impossible to keep. However, it fails to explain why societies with well-structured social relations and social organization still have witchcraft accusations.

Karl Marx's metaphoric Fetishism of Commodity outlines a possible explanation. It highlights the dominance of commodity as attributes of life, power, autonomy and dominance in the society. These elements bestow on men some favours and could alienate others from their labour. They explore the disruption of the relationship between the producer and his product by ignoring the intrinsic value or true worth of an object in terms of the labour/efforts involved in making it, and focusing mainly on the price attached to it. Taussig's Commodity fetishism (Devil belief model) derives from Karl Marx's, and goes deeper into pre-capitalist societies from which emanate the organic unity between persons and their products. It is a conceptual paradigm which underscores the effects of capitalism and its economic lure of profit 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.

Taussig's (1980) observations were based on the rural peasants in the sugarcane plantations of the Cauce valley, and the tin mines of highland Bolivia, in South America. He noted that they invoke the devil in order to increase and maintain productions as they became landless wage labourers (perhaps due to the incentives they are likely to derive from their employers as a result of increased productions and

profit that will accrue from it). As peasants cultivating their own land, they did not invoke the devil but did so much later, as reaction to the supplanting of their traditional mode of production by the exploiting capitalists. They have conceived the exploiter as evil. The response of the peasants was that of a cultural resistance to alien values, seen as oppositional to what was central to the organization of their traditional way of ordering social life. The capitalist mode of production was seen as flavoured with evil and the devil, the personification of its acts/intensions.

The devil symbolically presents and represents 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). Among the Bakweri of West Cameroon, those who associated themselves with plantations and became visibly better-off were also accused of witchcraft. Their wealth was associated with capitalism and observed to be at variance with the natives' normative social ethos. The Bakweri labelling of the witch stems from and reflects on the emergence of individualistic value and the profit oriented norm of capitalism, which are supposedly opposed to peasants' culture of communalism. When the price of banana dropped, within the Bakweri society, being a devil or evil was a new way of accounting for the misfortune which had brought about change in social relations. The form of witchcraft accusation similarly shifts to emphasis on how to accommodate the pattern of tension and conflict brought about by change in the society. The devil belief model particularly became a mediation of opposites, of the tension regarding 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 the researcher's view that in Akwa-Ibom, the capitalists, whose intent is to maximize profit, use child-labelling to reach the same goal of capital accumulation, in what is a calculated egoistic advantage over defenseless others.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The fieldwork for this thesis was conducted in Eket, Akwa-Ibom state. It commenced formally in March, 2010, shortly after the presentation of the pre-field proposal, and continued until September, 2011, when it was completed. It started with participant observation, which lasted over twelve months, and ran concurrently with other methods such as in-depth and key informant interviews. At the commencement of the fieldwork, the researcher met Sam Itauma, the president of CRARN, whom she had known previously on account of this “child-witch saga”, in their efforts to resettle the children in other homes before CRARN was established. She intimated him of her mission and intents. He took her to the office, introduced her to other members of staff and solicited their support for her. It was easy for her, thereafter, to integrate and gain acceptance of staff and the children, some of whom had known her previously, having visited the centre several times before the commencement of the fieldwork. So, coming to ‘work’ with the staff and children was like homecoming for her, and to them it was like receiving one of their own.

Recognizing that the study is an ethnographic one that requires direct involvement and participation with the natives, we sought their consent. Ethical consideration requires that information consent should be sought from the subjects. In line with this requirement/expectation, and considering that witchcraft is a subject people are skeptical about discussing, the consent of the informants were sought verbally after they were thoroughly informed about the research, the researcher, the sponsor, the purpose and the use of the research. In the community, where in-depth interview was conducted, the consents of the informants were sought before the interview session began. Some informants granted that their real names should be used while others declined, they rather prefer to be disguised (not real name). The consent of the children was also sought individually as well as through the CRARN. Permission was granted but in accordance with ethical considerations, deliberate attempt was made to avoid pasting their pictures in the work though an album of personal and group pictures were collected at different points of participant observation.

3.2 Research site

The research site is Eket, and as indicated in figure 1, it constitutes a local government within Akwa-Ibom state. A substantial portion of the data in this work is based on the culture, experiences, and the strategies of living devised by the people. The entire community is the sampling population, even the street life, and particularly its subculture, is of special interest, as the site(s) the labelled children spend most of their time.

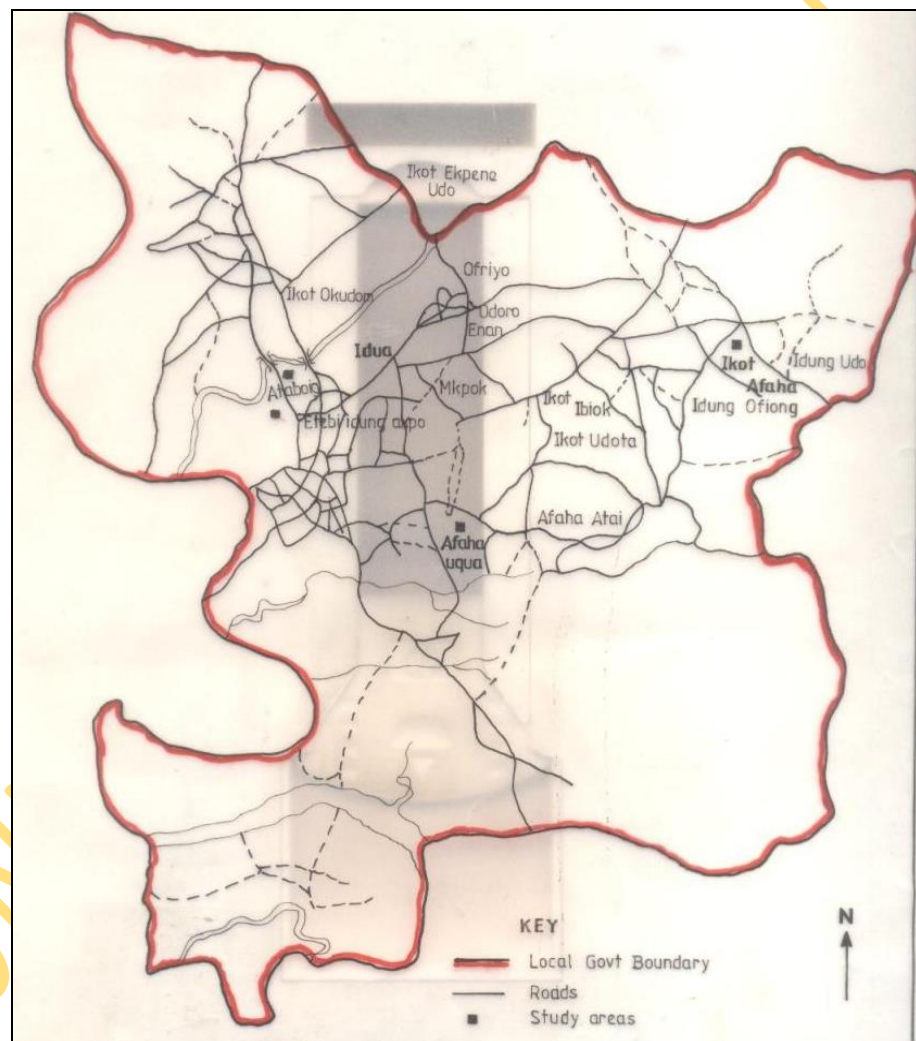


Figure 2. Research sites in Eket (Source: Eket Local Government Council, 2010)

An equally important aspect of this work, in its focus, relates to children in the rehabilitation home, CRARN, located at Ikot Afaha, in Eket Local Government Area. The turning from Eket town by James town junction, leading to Ikot-Afaha, has a sign post with the inscription “Say not, you witch; say, my precious child!” as could be seen in plate 1. The phrase itself is an attestation to some of the significant issues in this work; namely, labelling as a form of categorization, the value of children as precious in the community, and the connection of the problem to religion as symbolized in and mediated by church. This is a signpost that indicates the presence of CRARN.



Plate1. Sign post at James town junction leading to Ikot-Afaha where CRARN is situated.



Plate2. Side view of Child's Right and Rehabilitation Network (CRARN)

Ikot-Afaha is a small village in Eket L.G.A and would, otherwise, have remained obscured but for the large number of supposed child-witches who have found solace at Child's Right and Rehabilitation Network (CRARN), which is located there. CRARN was founded in 2003 to, specifically, "shelter and protect" labelled children who parade the streets of Eket and its environs. They are rescued by rehabilitation workers from CRARN and taken to the institutional home, CRARN, which caters for the needs (accommodation, feeding, education, vocational training and medical care) of over two hundred children resident at the centre as of the time of this investigation.

3.3 Research design

Research design is the plan structure and strategy of investigation made in order to obtain answers to research questions and control variables (Onwueguzie and Leech, 2007). Descriptive survey design was adopted. The rationale guiding this choice is that the study population is vast; therefore, collecting information from every member of the population is practically impossible.

3.4 Characteristics of the sample

The demographic data sought from the informants include family background, gender, age and place of origin/resident. The sample cuts across all social boundaries, age, sex, education and socio-economic status. The age distribution of the sample is broadly categorized into adults and children. A total of 110 adults, which comprised 55% of the total sample, were interviewed. A total of 90 children (45%) of the entire population were in-depth interviewed; they comprise 86 street children and 4 agnates of the labelled. The children's age range was between 2-18 years. The demographic data was presented using percentage scores.

3.5 Population sample

The research population considered in this study is the Eket street children, and from our definition of the street child, they include the 214 children (108 male and 106 females) in CRARN, as of the time of study, and other children outside of CRARN centre. The indigenes and residents of Eket community, members of the three churches chosen for study, as well as the parents and the agnates of the street children, are all included in the population. In the sample, those selected for observation were 80 inmates of CRARN and 6 street children outside CRARN centre

who were also selected for in-depth interview. The total number of labelled children observed and interviewed was 86. They were interviewed along with 95 people from the community purposively selected for in-depth interview. There were 4 key informants, 2 from the community and the other two drawn from CRARN. 15 members of the sample were selected from the churches for interview, 5 people from each of the three churches covered. In all, a total of two hundred informants were used for this study.

3.6 Sampling procedure

The sampling one adopts is dependent on the information sought and the objectives it seeks to achieve/explain. Witchcraft as a belief system is a cultural phenomenon, therefore, cultural data requiring expert explanations are inevitable. In view of this, purposive sampling was adopted. Purposive sampling requires that informants are selected based on certain criteria. Considering that the topic is a sensitive one, that requires an in-depth search, it became apparent that informants who are knowledgeable and have insight into the issues under investigation be selected. In view of this, purposive sampling was used for selecting the key informants. This is because they have deep insights and privileged information on the issues under investigation due mainly to the positions they occupy. Purposive sampling was also adopted in selecting 86 labelled children within and outside CRARN for interview. This is because a specific category of street children was the focus of the study (child-witches). Therefore, not all street children qualified for this work, but most of those at CRARN, already labelled as witches, did. At CRARN the children numbered over 200; purposive sampling was used to select 80 out of them for observation and interview. The criterion used was that they had been on the street, as a result of witchcraft label, before they were rehabilitated. The rationale behind this choice was the need to know their experience of street life. This category of children was identified with the assistance of one of the staff who is charged with keeping the records of the children, she knows those who were brought into the centre from the street.

Purposive sampling was equally used in the community. The data sought requires informed people with expert knowledge on the subject matter either as a result of their position, involvement, experience, and/or relationship to the labelled. Purposively selected for interview from the community include the paramount ruler,

village heads, women leaders, opinion leaders, the police, social workers, parents and agnates of labeled children, pastors and members of selected churches, men, women, indigenes and residents of Eket among others.

3.7 Data collection technique

Primary and secondary source of data collection were used. Primary source of data collection includes participant observation, informal interview, in-depth interview, key informant interview and focus group discussion. Secondary data was sourced through, journals, articles, official records among others.

3.8 Method of data collection

From the outset, the fieldwork was designed to collect qualitative/narrative data in a natural setting in order to gain insight into the issues under investigation, which are on human relations. Qualitative data was preferred because it offered the opportunity of dealing with the informants directly and since the topic under investigation has to do with witchcraft, a subject which bothers on security of life, dealing with the informants directly was necessary to remove all social distance that might exist between the researcher and the informants. Bearing in mind that the credibility of this ethnographic study depends on the method adopted, multiple methodologies were inevitable, and had to entail using more than one method of data collection. It included participant observation, informal and In-depth interviews, key informant interview and focused group discussion to accommodate all shades of opinions and views. Unstructured interviews based on question guide were used. The question guides were used to maintain focus and were in accordance with the research objectives. They were consistently applied across respondents. The interview was flexible enough to allow some questions that were outside the question guide. Most of the questions were open ended, designed in the relevant language to give the informants liberty to express their views and possibly raise other issues that may be useful to the direction of the research.

(a) Key informants

Two key informants were purposively selected among the staff of CRARN, with one of them being an elderly male staff that was the live-in officer. He resides with the male children in their hostel, and has done so for over three years. 'Daddy', as he was popularly called by the children, is in a position to give information relating

to the behaviours of the children. The second key informant from CRARN was a young female staff, serving as administrative officer saddled with the responsibility of taking the life history and keeping the records of the children. She was useful to the work as one who facilitated reconciliation with their parents. She provided information relating to the children and served as a guide to their homes, especially of those who were reconciled. Two other key informants were selected from Eket community. They are royal fathers of the host communities of CRARN (the clan and village heads of Ekid-Odiong and Ikot-Afaha respectively). They are versed in the culture of the Eket people, and gave relevant information relating to their norms and values. They also explained the roles expected of children in the family and the community.

Audio tapes and field notes were used to record all interviews, which was conducted with the help of two research assistants who interpreted the questions or gave further explanations to the questions using the language that semi-literate informants could understand. Pieces of information elicited from the key informants were, basically, those bordering on norms and values of Eket people, particularly as they related to children, the concept of a witch, and the steps taken to exorcise the spirit of witchcraft.

(b) In-depth interviews

Royal fathers and opinion leaders, including the paramount ruler of Eket, HRH Edidem, T.P. Enodien, who also doubled as the chairman of Akwa Ibom state traditional rulers' council (at the time of the interview, he died six months after the interview was conducted), were among those selected for in-depth interview. The village head of the immediate community (Uda Ikot-Afaha), Chief Nmma Edohoseh, women leader, Obong-awan Mrs. Williams of Okon-Eket, were all in the list. The village heads were reached through the research assistants who are natives of Ikot-Afaha and Ikot-odiong respectively. The paramount ruler was reached through the help of a pastor friend, while Obong-awan was reached by personal efforts during a workshop conducted in Eket by National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Related Matters (NAPTIP), which involved royal fathers, opinion leaders, the local government officials, and the NGOs working with labelled children. Information relating to Eket perception of witchcraft and norms and values of Eket people was elicited from them at various dates chosen for interview. They were

personally interviewed in the company of a research assistant, who had to interpret or elucidate on the question in the native language where necessary. The interview usually began on an informal note, in the form of a personal conversation, before gradually taking the form of an in-depth interview as the informant willingly gave the information sought. Each interview session lasted, on the average, about two hours with each key informant. Other members of the community, as earlier stated, numbering 95 people overall and including men, women, social workers, and 15 members drawn from the three churches (including pastors and church members) were also interviewed for information on the following: public perception of and responses to street children, the level of acceptance and reintegration, motives behind labelling, and the expected roles of children in the family. The interviews were held at their homes, or, in some cases, in their offices/shops and lasted on the average about 30minutes with each one of them.

The president of CRARN and other members of staff were also sampled. They were interviewed at the centre at different dates and time convenient for the informants. They supplied information on peoples' responses to their activities, the welfare of the children, and the behaviours of the children at the centre. Lastly, 86 street children were interviewed. 80 labelled children were purposively chosen from CRARN; the rationale was their experiences of street life. They were individually interviewed at the centre, having worked with them for over six months before the interview. As a result, the good rapport established with them, coupled with small gifts of biscuits, money and other items given to the children, also oiled the cordial atmosphere. Witchcraft is a very sensitive matter. Its investigation, therefore, requires good personal rapport and confidence. The interview involved informal conversations at the beginning, so the children were at ease to disclose the information elicited from them as the interview progressed. Six labeled children on the street were also interviewed. The interview took place at Steppingstone office (another NGO that supports them) as efforts to reach them in their hideouts did not yield positive results. Most of the times when the researcher visited, they were out, and the few she met declined comments, perhaps due to skepticism. However, in the office where they collect a weekly allowance, they grant interviews, since they were reassured by the SSN staffs that the researcher had related with in the course of this work, as they jointly went for advocacy programmes in the communities. Secondly, the researcher met the first set of children that they attempted to rehabilitate at Edo state, so they

recognized her and willingly consented to the interview. Information elicited from them includes their ordeals with pastors, experiences on the streets, public perception and responses, and the consequences of their being labelled. Information gathered was recorded using tape recorder and video tape (Of course only when they were allowed). Field note was also used. Unedited quotes were cited verbatim in the language of the interview.

(c) Informal interview

The informal interview as a complement of the in-depth interview and participant observation did not follow any formal procedure but entailed gathering information in form of informal conversation which was staged at points of encounter. The method was employed right from the beginning to the later stages of the research and complemented well with in-depth interview and participant observation to elicit information from the children, particularly the ones on the street that were initially skeptical. It was, also, used to gather information on witchcraft, a subject that most people prefer to be silent about, for fear of bewitchment/attack.

(d) Participant observation

In the course of this fieldwork, the researcher was actively involved in the daily activities of CRARN. She had opportunity to teach at the academy, though not as a regular class teacher.

This gave her ample opportunity to observe staff and children's behaviours, particularly their interpersonal relations, and to offer counsel to the children. On some occasions she was involved in reconciliation exercise, which afforded her the privilege of interacting with parents both in their homes and at the centre, and asking questions on why and how their children were labelled. As they spoke she took special note of how the children took to the streets and what their parents attitudes were, particularly their willingness or otherwise to accept the children back. The researcher visited six children that were reconciled with their families, two of them were reconciled by Stepping Stone Nigeria; they were reached through the help of one of their staff. The two children reconciled by Stepping Stone had absconded from their homes due to the various offences (stealing, truancy, disobedience, etc.) they were said to have committed, and no efforts were made by their mothers to locate them or get them back to the house. The remaining four were reconciled by CRARN.

They were reached through the help of the female key informant at CRARN, responsible for effecting reconciliation with their families. There was, of course, some trying moments as when, on the 10th of November, 2010, the EFCC (Economic and Financial Crime Commission) stormed the centre and attempted to arrest the administrative officer of CRARN, following the unavailability of Mr. Itauma, the president, who could not be found to answer to alleged petitions against him/CRARN by anonymous persons.

The participant observation extended to the three churches chosen for study; these churches were chosen because most of the labelled children interviewed had implicated them. It therefore, became expedient to investigate what goes on in some of them. The researcher attended the churches always in the company of a research assistant, an indigene of Akwa Ibom state. He assisted in recording and interpreting the language of the service, which was always in the vernacular. Various visits were made to each of the three churches selected because they attracted large membership, and the modes of prayer and fasting meetings were observed. These were much preferred by the people to regular Sunday services because the protocols associated with Sunday services were breached, and the main emphasis was on prayer and the prophesy they loved to hear.

(e) Focus group discussion

At inception, focus group discussion was not intended in the methods chosen, but it became necessary as the study progressed especially, as the researcher got involved with the activities of CRARN, participating in workshops, town hall meetings and advocacy programmes organized by CRARN and other partners on the issue of child witches. Interaction with them revealed the need to explore this technique which offers a wide range of opinion and opportunity to probe people's emotional reactions to the issues raised.

Two focus group discussions were organized. The first one held on the 24th of March, 2011 at Christ for the world mission, Eket, with six pastors in attendance. The Pastors were reached through the assistance of a Pastor friend who is the secretary of the Christian association of Nigeria (CAN), Eket chapter. With the help of the pastor friend, arrangement had been made to meet with the six Pastors drawn from different denominations. Questions were raised on why children are labelled, the involvement of the pastors in the child witch labelling, motives behind the

exercise, exorcism and abandonment of the children unto the street. The high point of the meeting was when the question on the role of pastors was raised. The responses and reactions of the people over the issues were of particular interest. The discussion revealed divergent views held on the issue of witchcraft, the moral justification Pastors' advance for exorcism and the underlining factor for abandonment of the children unto the street. More importantly, it revealed both verbal and non verbal responses of the people. The proceedings of the meeting were video recorded. Data generated from the focused group discussion was useful in data analysis.

Inspired by the outcome the first focused group discussion, the researcher set out to organize another. It held on the 7th of September, 2011, organized within the interval of six months from the first. This time, it was targeted at the community. It has a composition of six members comprising social worker, a police officer, a parent of a labeled child, a teaching staff of CRARN, a driver and Obong-awam (women leader). Six participants were preferred for effective coordination. The participants were reached by the researcher through personal efforts. The interactive session lasted for over three hours with the researcher as the facilitator. Unstructured questions were used but were guided in the direction of the objectives of the study. Issues discussed bothered on the concept of a witch, behavioural deviations susceptible to witchcraft labelling, stigmatization and the abandonment of children to the street and their perception of street children to mention a few. Again, it was insightful as well as informative with reactions put up, questions asked and arguments raised as to whether child witchcraft labelling and abandonment is justifiable or not. Field note and video recorder were used to record the information gathered from the group discussion.

(f) Photograph and audio/video recorder

Pictures of the churches visited as well as other scenes considered relevant to the study were captured. The intention was to interrogate the respondents for meanings and values that could be relevant to the study. Audio tapes and video cameras were of immense value in recording actions and conversations of informants, even though the use of video camera was not often allowed in the churches during prayer meetings. The pastors argued that it could become a form of distraction in prayer meetings and the message/prophesy being disseminated could be disturbed. Video camera was used to record the focused group discussions. The pictures and recorded materials were useful in capturing non-verbal gestures that portrayed the

responses of the people toward the labelled, particularly such information that was not verbalized. The field note contained records of my observations and conversations in the field.

3.9 Method of data analysis

Qualitative method of analysis which entails describing, summarizing and interpreting data was used. Percentage scores were used for demographic data. The information gathered was examined for content and meaning. The process involved listening to the audiotape, and noting the occurrences of concepts, the local exegesis offered and the relationship existing between negative and positive ideas, as trends and significance. It involved setting the research objectives in different columns of an exercise book, and categorizing as well as sorting the information collected to them, based on supporting and non-supporting data. The data so arranged are presented in the analysis done in this work as narratives and vignettes in the first person account. The interpretation of the data was, again, systematically pursued via thematic capturing of research objectives and contents, in a way that verbal and non-verbal texts were deconstructed, for hidden sub texts, in the effort to present and represent the realities of the children on the street and those in institutionalized home.

CHAPTER FOUR
DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND INTRPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This section of the thesis is concerned with the presentation and analysis of data. Starting with the demographic data presented in simple tabular form, and proceeding to the intent and thrust of the research objectives, community norms and values were examined. Attention was devoted to the perception of a witch in Eket, with the aim of apprehending the personal narratives that serve as data from the perspective of the theoretical framework of Commodity Fetishism.

4.2 Statistical presentation of demographic data

(a) Sex distribution of the informants

Table 1

Sex of informants	Male	female	Total
Number of informants	102	92	200
Percentage	51%	49%	100%

Source: (Personal communication)

From the table above, 51% of the informants are male, while 49% are female. The sex distribution for male is slightly higher than female because three out of the four key informants are male.

(b) Family background

Table 2

Family background	Stable home	Step parent	Single parent	Foster parents	Grand parents	Total
No of informants	3	38	24	15	6	86
Percentage	3.5%	44.2%	27.9%	17.4%	7%	100%

Source : (Personal communication)

Interview with the 86 labelled children and visit to six homes of reconciled children revealed that most of them came from poverty stricken homes. Most of the parents earn meager income as watchmen and motorcycle riders as the children revealed during the interview while many others are simply unemployed and yet with large families to cater for. The above table indicates that only (3.5%) of them came from stable homes. Majority of them were from broken homes, (44%) living with step parents (dad or mum). Some (27.9%) were raised in families headed by single mothers, because, as was discovered during the interview, some were born out of wedlock; others have lost their fathers or their parents had separated and they are left in the custody of their mums. Also, 17.4% lived with foster parents, majority of whom are not related to them, while 7% lived with their grandparents. It is worthy of note that those living with grandparents also have other members of the extended family living with them. As was earlier stated, the Ibibio mostly live in the extended family setting, especially those in the villages.

(c) Place of origin

Table 3

Place of origin	Eket/Esit-Eket	Other L.G.A.s	Other states	Total
No of informants	112	57	31	200
Percentage	56%	28.5%	15.5%	100%

Source :(Personal communication)

Table 3 shows that most informants (84.5%) are of Akwa-Ibom origin, 56% are indigenes of Eket and 28.5% are from other local government areas but reside in Eket. Only 15.5% come from other states but are resident in Eket.

(d) Reasons for being on the street

Table 4

Reasons for being on the street	Marriage breakups	Pastors	Others	Economic reasons	Family misfortune	Total
No of informants	35	20	12	10	9	86
percentages	40.7%	23.3%	13.9%	11.6%	10.5%	100%

Source :(Personal communication)

The commonest reason given for being on the street is witchcraft labelling. So, 100% of the children interviewed confirmed they were labelled (that was the criterion used for selecting them). Table 4 shows that 40.7% blamed their ordeals on father's wife (marriage breakups), 23.3% on pastors, 13.9% on others (friends, neighbours, uncles, parents, etc.) while 11.6% linked theirs to economic reasons and 10.5% to other reasons including family misfortunes.

(e) Place of labeled

Table 5

Place of label	Home	Church	Others	Indictment	Total
No of informant	13	57	10	6	86
Percentage	15.2%	66.3%	11.6%	6.9%	100%

Source :(Personal communication)

Table 5 shows that 57 out of 86 (66.3%) of the children were labelled in churches, 15.2% at home, 11.6% by others and the remaining 6.9% were indicted by other children that had been labelled.

(f) Exorcism

Table 6

Exorcism	Pastors	Traditional Healers	No exorcism	Total
No of respondents	55	6	25	86
Percentages	64%	7%	29.0%	100%

Source :(Personal communication)

Table 6 shows that (64%) of the respondents had experienced exorcism with men of God, (7%) with traditional healers and (29%) said they were not taken anywhere for exorcism because of the monetary involvement.

The longest time the children have spent on the street was eight (8) years, as at the time of the interview, and for most of them this ranged between three to five (3-5) years. Moreover, 32% of them were on the street for less than one year before they were rescued by CRARN for rehabilitation.

4.3 The norms and values of Eket people

Norms are the standard patterns of behaviour of a particular community. They constitute the basis of prescribing acceptable behavioural patterns to which members of a given community are expected to comply. The norms are passed on to younger generations through the process of socialization. They aggregate as yardsticks for measuring conformity, as well as standards. Eket community does not prescribe formal laws as was gathered from the paramount ruler of Eket, HRM, Edidem, T. P. Enodien in an interview (conducted in July, 2010 before his demise in 2011), rather there is an 'offort' (unwritten traditional injunctions) which translates as socially approved norms and values, and acts as a sort of collective conscience that guides behaviours. As the royal father stated, no Eket person or anyone domiciled in Eket can interfere or violate 'offort', which comprised several norms; and since it is a 'social fact', its affecting presence is incontestable. With regard to children's behaviours, the expectation is that they must comply with the will and directives of their parents or guardians irrespective of their own ideas or emotions, since the

assumption is that whatever decisions or directives parents take/give are in the best interest of the child. This notion of parent-child relations may have been accepted in the past, but the reality on ground now is that with changes brought by information technology and the media, particularly the television, children are willing to challenge such expectations or completely break away from them. This departure challenges parental authority and breed intense intergenerational struggle which is often interpreted as one of insolence.

The royal father further opined that norms and roles can be gender and age biased, but noted that, generally, children of any age and gender are expected to perform those roles that will sustain the continuity of group or family traditions. Children's roles include running errands for their parents and helping in domestic chores. They carry out community assignments such as sanitation and erecting village/town halls, depending on their age. They are indispensably positioned as utilitarian assets, on whom the moral and existential capacities of family and society rest, says both Dr Otu, a business man, resident in Eket and Chief Nmma Edohoseh, the village head of Uda, Ikot-Afaha.

To one informant, Mrs. Samuel (middle name), who is a civil servant and a mother of five and resident in Eket, children are expected to be respectful, obedient and honest. They should not insult elders. They must embody sound character and, as image bearers, reflect and practise what the community upholds and/or abhors. Obong-awan Williams, a nurse, and woman leader of Okon community in Eket, added that children must uphold communal norms, for to do otherwise is to violate societal norms and bring shame to their families and the community as well. To many of the informants, when a child excels, his community shares in the glory; likewise, when he brings disgrace they share in the blame and mess. Hence, when a child steals, he is not only addressed by his name but also by that of his village as well; because personal character and community image are of intricate complex web. Thus, according to Williams, children that are stubborn, idle, insolent, greedy, jealous and wicked, or those that refuse to heed the advice or instruction of parents and, or, keep bad company, signal the death of an image, both of the individual and the collective; and painfully more so as in this proverb - "idieh ayiu abide ubu-un eti" (meaning a bad child ruins his father's family). Violators, as the paramount ruler stated in his book *Our Way of Life and Death*, belong to the evil forest (Akai Edoho); they are, according to Chief Edohoseh, to be ostracized, fined and possibly ex-communicated.

The nature of the offence one commits determines the sanction; as the disrespect of elders may not necessarily amount to witchcraft label, but it could, ultimately, become negative for image characterization. One informant, Mr. Udo, an indigene of Idungudo and father of four, speaking on deviancy, as basis for witchcraft labelling, identified a succinct process, which is that:

Akpa, afeh atongho mme ayou. Adeh ayou atongho abong idie-esie ifu akongho edu-uwe esie. Mme uwod-mkpo ayeh imiyimke addiah nno mbie nyong ume itieh mkpa-awe ubak itiehndo, Mkpo ifo-nno.

First, you start from the child. The child will first call himself a witch through his behaviour. For instance, when a child will not eat at home but goes about in public places like burial or marriage parties eating and carrying food away, then something is wrong. (Personal communication 2010)

Deviant behaviours can include not eating at home and anyone who engages in indiscriminate eating (a behaviour that is judged amoral) can also be susceptible to labelling as the belief is that witchcraft can be acquired through food or drink.

Chief Uwem emphatically stated:

Ami nkid nte ke awe ama akid akpuho awe nte ami anim akpono, ndien uto awe amme mibiake awe kiang ake - ade ade. Mbiad nte kea de idiok-awe, awo awe akpu-ukid fi ikom-ke, iku-ke mkpo, uto awe ada ke afe abiad nte idiok-awe-mm-mm". "Awe kiang ake-ade-ade ayie akpono, akom mme akpuho-awe asiok atieh mme ufak anne mkpo. Nsi-isi-ideh ufon amme Abasi ake annoho awe ayu mme ini ayieh mikuke ikwo, ayieh ade idiok ayu".

I expect that when somebody sees an elderly person like me, he should respect me. But anybody who does not regard or respect an elder is a bad person. A child is expected to respect and greet an elder, sit at home and do something. What is the use, if God gives you a child, who does not listen to you? He is a bad/evil child) (Personal communication).

The word 'idiok ayu'(bad/evil child) as used in this context may, literally, be considered as expressing displeasure or disappointment with the behaviour of a child. But it also connotes evil, a concept which is synonymous in Eket worldview to deviation from offort.

When children become unruly or blatantly flout and disregard the authority of parents, they exhibit a behaviour which is akin to that in which a proletariat loses control over labour, and if this stirs up opposition to capital accumulation (a value system), then, from the offort point of view, there can be agitation to all that the

society represents. Whether this is in form of capital, human or economic asset, or not, opposition takes on a value, and not as a proposition, but as a reality that threatens normative ethos vis-a-vis social order. The oppositional value, even as conceived by the Bakweri's peasants in Taussig's (1980) study, is flavoured with evil (being in the image of negative change).

4.4 Family disintegration, the bane of child labelling

Nigerians live in a depressed economy in which has emerged the threat of alienation and new institutional demands leaving many families in socio-economic disarray. The family has been destabilized as an institution and, so much so, as Akintunde (2009) opines, that it could no longer adequately take care of its wards. At CRARN, almost all the children interviewed linked their ordeals to 'father wife', and in some cases it is the absence of the father. Five out of the six reconciled families that were visited were headed by unemployed single mothers lacking the financial wherewithal required to raise their children alone. The absence of the fathers to render support, exercise control and enforce discipline causes the children to develop a feeling of despair and eventually take to the street as two of their mothers revealed. The basic values children should have learnt from parents were unintentionally ignored and omitted in their socialization process. The resulting deviant behaviour is erroneously labelled witchcraft and the children are sent onto the street.

In Jane Sam Bassy's stories, there is a greater insight into events in broken homes. The thirteen year old Jane is from Ikot-Usoekong in Eket L.G.A., and is a victim of a broken home. Her parents have both remarried, but Jane bears the scar of their separation. She has found refuge with other labelled children at CRARN. Her ordeal began shortly after she returned from Calabar where she went to visit her mum.

As I just came back from Calabar, I heard my Step-mother talking, she said that my mother said that I mention her witch, that she gave me witch, so when my father come back, I just hear as he said 'who allow that witch to enter my house'? At night, when I was lying down but I was not sleeping, my father thought I was sleeping, he drew out a machete to cut me but I ran away into the bush. Later, when my grandmother came, she took me back to my father. In the house, they will be talking, if anything happen they will say I am the one that did it. One day, my father's wife took me to one church that does not have name (it is pertinent to note that some of these churches are prayer houses where prophecies rather than the word of God are the guiding principle). When we reach there, the pastor said my step- mum should keep me in the front while she sat at the back. The pastor was

prophesying, saying who has this spoilt child? Because they plan it, my step mum stood up but I was not the only child in the church o! The pastor asked her to come out, asking her if she remembered the television that spoiled in the house, the radio that sparked and when they collect car key from her husband who 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 reach home, my step mother tell my father everything 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. I left and stay in the bush. I went to school from the bush for one month. I sell bitter leaf to buy food because that time many people did not know, so they use to buy my bitter leaf but if they know, nobody will buy it. I use to eat raw cassava and palm fruit or pluck peoples pawpaw and orange and eat. Later, I move to the market. But boys used to worry me there. So I move to Eket town where I join other street children. We use to sleep in the afternoon because in the night, people use to worry us. We also look for food. We use to beg or steal people's things to eat. The boys use to enter people's shop in the night to look for money or bread or anything. I sweep people shop in the market. Some will give me something, and some people too will pursue me and call me names. Men use to worry us. Sometimes they give us money. One day, one cyclist carried one of the girls and took her to that upstairs in the motor park and raped her and gave her five naira. When we heard as she was crying, we went there but the cyclist was holding penknife. It was not easy. People use to threaten us. One day some people come with knife to kill us because one woman that use to give us something die. They say we are the one that kill her; that we use her good to do her bad. They brought plank with nail to hit us. Later, somebody come and tell me that there is a place at Ikot-Afaha where people use to stay that is why I came here (Personal communication, 2014).

This kind of story is quite familiar in Eket. It is a mirror of the harms that broken marriages cause, especially to children. Jane's visit to her mum was the genesis of her problem as the step-mum taunted her and accused her of witchcraft. The moment she was labelled, she became an object of verbal abuse, stigmatization and rejection. She was thrown out into the street because the family failed to provide solution, even though there was a move to look to another institution for help. Jane was first taken to the church for help; unfortunately her problem, rather than abated, became compounded when the church connived with her step-mum to identify her as the 'spoilt child' in the congregation. The idea of being 'spoilt' aggravated her situation, sending it fast beyond redemption that could favour the child. Jane did understand later that her case was a ploy between her step-mother and the pastor to

cast aspersion on her; meaning that the solution was worked out one 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. 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.

These constituted the 'proof' of the atrocities she had committed as a witch. She was gradually, but systematically, destroyed as a human being and devalued as social capital. The process involved, first, the suspicion/accusation at home; second, the affirmation of a man of God; third, the labelling, and, fourth, exorcism or abandonment. She moved out of the house into the bush and from the bush to the market, lost as it were to a world mined with dangers, one that is unfriendly, and one that she cannot control.

The above supports Sam Itauma's (CRARN president) claim that broken home is a major contributor to the menace of street-child. He said that 80% of children in CRARN were products of broken homes. Their parents had separated and remarried. The children suffer the effect of their separation. When any of them remarries, the present wife/husband rarely wants to take responsibility/care of the children or is apprehensive that the other party may have to share his/her love with the child. To avoid such occurrences, he/she deploys witchcraft labelling as cogent reason to send the child away. It is particularly so when the new wife does not have a child of her own or when any of her children dies. It follows then that witchcraft labelling represents an attempt to resolve a crisis within the family. The case of Regina Essien Bassy seems to fit into this paradigm. A labelled child at CRARN, she narrates her story thus:

When my sister die, my father wife said is me that kill the baby. She carry me to Apostolic church at Ikot-Okudom, the pastor there say is me that kill my sister. My father believe and my father wife pursue me from house. I went to stay on the street in Eket with other children. Uncle Lucky (a staff of Stepping Stone) come and bring me to Ikot-Afaha. (Personal communication 2010).

Regina's case, like many others, affirms the view that crisis and misfortunes in the family are a pretext for suspicions and witchcraft labelling (Ranger, 1991 and Olsen, 2002).

Observation revealed that most of the so-called marriages in Eket are illegitimate. This, perhaps, is due to the high cost of bride wealth which the paramount ruler of Eket, Edidem Enodien, bemoans in his book, stating that marriage in Eket has become what he describes as “edibi idiok itighe nkpo esak”, meaning unleashing poverty on prospective suitors (Enodien, 2008:36). The result is that many young people have devised a system of marriage in which couples co-habit without adequately or legally formalizing their relationships. There is nothing legally binding on any of them. In this regard, it is easy for any of them to walk out of the relationship if it does not work out, and thus underplaying the consequences of such action/decision on the children. This type of “marriage” has become increasingly rampant in Eket. Anna, (not real name) a teaching staff of CRARN, during the focused group discussion, shares the view of what she attributed to ‘free rangers’, in the marriage institution. She opined that nowadays most girls are not ready to suffer with their spouses and that many of them are morally lax. Some would rather walk out of the marriage and play harlotry, which she said is a lucrative business in Eket, especially with the expatriates that work for the oil company. She cited one Helen, a little girl of about 3-4 years, in CRARN, whose mother engaged in such practice. The results of such venture, she said, are illegitimate children abandoned on the pretext of child witchcraft. The phenomenon of child witchcraft, thus, has become a convenient idiom for social cleansing of children considered to be undesirable, or of getting rid of children by way of labelling that could lead to abandonment or death. Another discussant, Emem, a civil servant with ministry of social welfare, concurred but added that men equally have a part in it. Her view was that most men do not possess the required maturity for handling the challenges that marriage throws at them and as such cannot handle the crisis that comes with it. When this happens, they shift the blame to their wives or accuse their children of witchcraft.

4.5 Economic reasons underpinning labelling

The trading of causes is the result of a harsh economic condition that is having adverse effect on most families in the state. There is an obvious socio-economic differentiation and sharp disparity between the haves and the have-nots. The tension manifests in the shape of aggressive and resentful feeling of deprivation by majority of the citizenry, especially the unemployed and those living in abject poverty who feel cheated out of the stupendous wealth that is controlled and corralled by oil workers

and members of the political class as is commonly expressed in conversation among the people. Excluded from the benefits of the mineral wealth and the dividends of democracy, many of the deprived have either reacted violently or resigned to fate, blaming their predicaments on witches, and visiting pastors for solution to this problem. In addition, the problem of witchcraft has persisted because many people are locked up in the struggle for advancement, as one informant, Mr. Udo, stated: *mmeawe ekeme abie ifu efok unana ubak emmo adi-ibie nkanghandito emmo* (some people use witchcraft to cover up their inability to cater for their children). Dr. Mrs. Akpaime (not real name), a medical doctor resident in Eket, the street children are from poor homes, their parents cannot adequately care for them due to their financial incapacitation. She asked rhetorically,

How many rich men's children are among those called witches? How many doctors, or politicians, or Mobil workers' children are on the street? Or is witchcraft only for the poor? The labelling is just a way of shying away from parental responsibilities; it is a wrong way of solving problems. Giving out those children for adoption would have been better than throwing them away like that. (Personal communication, September 2010)

Indeed, Prophet Effiong Etim Obisung confided in the researcher during an interview session in CRARN, that the child (his grandchild, Esther) was an additional burden to him. He is too old and too weak to engage in any lucrative job that would sustain both of them. He brought the child to the centre because his neighbours who normally supported him financially had urged him to take the child to 'government' (CRARN). He, however, pledged to take the child back in future if the government would train her. The witchcraft label merely conceals poverty, which is the underlying factor behind his action.

Most children in CRARN are from poor families as interview with them and visit to their homes revealed. They have gone through excruciating experiences of poverty, stemming from deteriorating economic condition and the accompanying strain of systemic failure resulting in parents' inability to fulfill basic obligations to their children. The poor parents use labelling as escape route, because it offers cogent explanation for wanting to abandon their children/wards on the street as sacrifices for their failure in the class struggle. Poverty may not be peculiar to Eket/Akwa-Ibom state, but the prohibition of child-labour that had hitherto been a major source of economic support to families in the state has accentuated family poverty. The children

who were in the past engaged in street hawking, domestic helps and other forms of child labour as part of their contributions to family resources, have been taken off the streets, as a result of the prohibition of child labour and the free and compulsory education policy of governor Akpabio's administration. They are no longer relevant to family income; rather, they appear as sources of drain on limited family resources. So, witchcraft labelling is tactically used to denigrate children who have become additional burden to their families. Not everybody would agree, though, with this view. For instance, Obong-awan Edoho (not real name), women leader of Idung-Inan, during the focused group discussion stressed that although Akwa-Ibom state is reputed for 'house help' syndrome, which has incidentally escalated the problem of child labelling, as most of the children given out as house helps are accused of witchcraft, Eket people are generally known to be proud and as such would reluctantly subject their children to domestic service or street life. She, of course, concurs that the level of poverty in the community is on the increase but that the contributory factor is not the prohibition of child labour; rather, it is the pastors' greed and elite's ostentatious lifestyle.

4.6 Elite and religious profiteering

Englana and Bamidele (1999) noted that when joblessness keeps the individual in a position where he/she is unable to cater adequately for his/her basic needs, as well as meet social and economic obligations, survival strategies that are devised are usually anti-social. The deplorable economic situation in the community 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 its/his chances of survival and dominance.

Western influences have also impacted on church conduct, reorienting pastors' conception of their roles as shepherds whose preoccupation is to nurture, tend, lead and guide the sheep (members). They have become preoccupied with materialistic ends, destroying the protective and caring roles they were formally noted for. 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 labelling, concealing their latent capitalistic motives, because the parents (of these children) are incapable of defending them. In Taussig’s view, the regulation of social activity is (now) computed by men calculating their egoistic advantage over other. 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. Obong-awan William of Okon- Eket note:

Pastors are the major problem. They do all kinds of things to drive big cars, build duplexes, and wear expensive suits and compete with Mobil men. So, they task their members and device all kinds of things to make money. All they preach is prosperity; some of them go to native doctors to get power. In fact, many of them are fake. If you see a real man of God that is called of God he cannot collect money for deliverance because that power is a gift from God. (Personal communication, 2010)

The concept of Commodity Fetishism as espoused by Taussig 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’s allegiance to the shepherd”, as Pastor Nyong says, they take advantage of the weak. The reason is simple: religion, like capitalism, alienates its adherents. The more members are committed to their pastors, the more alienated they become to themselves, and the more they lose their discretions to him. They (pastors), thus, become, in Mrs. Samuel’s words, cheats who would claim to be able to do all kinds of things. She recounted her experience in 2003, shortly after her husband passed on, when one of her neighbours brought one of such pastors from Uyo to her house in Eket. She said;

The pastor told me that witches meet in my parlour at night that I have to do assignment to stop their plans. He said I should put ten thousand naira each in five envelopes which he will give to the 'channels' (pastors and prophets) who will come and do something to stop the witches. I refused, and my neighbour opted to lend me the money, but I objected. When the pastor saw that I was not willing to do it, he brought the amount down to five thousand naira each. I refused and since then, nothing has happened. They are all looking for money, they are cheats, and they deceive people. They are not true men of God. All the native doctors I knew in my village as a young lady have all turned presidents and founders of churches, all in the bid to make money, and that is the problem. (Personal communication, 2010)

Words such as 'fake', 'cheats', 'deceivers' 'not approved', 'not rightly dividing the truth' etc, were used by pastor Nyong and Mrs. Samuel 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. Though Evangelist Ukpabio, founder of Liberty Gospel Church, in an interview with Newswatch magazine, admitted conducting deliverance for well over twenty thousand people on the issue of witchcraft, she refuted the allegation that she was collecting money for exorcism. But the fact is that the 'body' of both parents and children have lost the power of voice, as objects of money, driven by forces unknown and unheard. A person like Idung Stephen Friday's (a labelled child at CRARN) father can attempt to bury his child alive, because the pastor had said so.

4.7 The concept of a witch in Eket

Eket people believe there are two cosmological worlds, that of adro-bod or physical/visible world, and the Abio-ekpuk, the spiritual/invisible world. The spiritual/physical world is mediated by two forces or spirits. The good spirit (edisanga- spirit), originating from God (Abasi), is one that is accessed through prayer (akam), and the evil spirit (ekpo) coming from Satan can be caught anywhere. It takes some mystical powers to access the spiritual world. Witches, though humans, reside in the physical world and operate from the spiritual realm because of the inherent supernatural powers they possess. The popular conception of witches as wicked, destructive, hardhearted, envious and jealous is widespread (the attributes associated with a non-conforming child). The individual is wicked beyond bounds; they are ifu, a word regarded as synonymous with evil. The wickedness transcends the act, as

Tannenbaum's (1938) suggested in his idea of 'The Dramatization of Evil', because there is a shift from the definition of the act as 'bad' to the redefinition of the individual as 'evil'.

Ifu, Eket version of a witch, is used in two senses. First, it is to refer to anybody who behaves mischievously, including being wicked, stubborn, destructive, greedy, acting mean, hard-hearted, insolent, disrespectful, eating in dreams, crying at night. Such behaviours are believed to contradict or deviate from communal norms and values, and are either ifu-awe adikuho see-etang, or ifu-awe nsung-iboho (that is, a witch that does not 'hear word' or refuses to listen). In the second usage, a witch is one who, in addition to possessing the above attributes, has confessed, or has been indicted by another witch, a traditional doctor/spiritualist or a pastor (Offiong, 1991). As an informant stated, they send me out because Ime mention me witch. Another informant confirmed the second usage when he brought his grandchild (Esther) to CRARN, claiming the child is a witch. When interrogated, he said, eyeh ada iwua esie etang (the child has used her mouth to say it). Personal confession is obviously vital to being confirmed a witch, but while under duress and with limited options, one will be compelled to confess and be spared or will risk being killed. An admission of witchcraft is an escape route, though one with unsavoury consequences.

In Eket, there are two kinds of witches, the black (abudbit) and the white (afia) witches. Black witches are malevolent and evil; they kill their victims, hence the term ifu amme ataha-awe (that is, witches that kill). They cause accidents, barrenness and sickness. They are mean, amoral, and wicked. This is the category that many of the informants believe the street children belong to. White witchcraft, on the other hand, is more of a status symbol associated with prominent people, who are wealthy or influential and use it for personal protection. The key informant at CRARN, Mr. Monday Jacob Udo (the male resident officer and an indigene of Effoi, in Eket L.G.A.), said that in the olden days, people purposefully acquired it and could boast of possessing it because it was benevolent and solely used for protection. The people who possessed it were respected members of the community. He added that this category of witches is rare these days but the black witches are on the increase due to increasing wickedness, envy, and excessive quest for power and dominance in the materialistic society. A witch, whatever the category, is jealous and resentful of others' good fortune. The jealousy, most times, is covert, as victims are oblivious of

it. It resides in the heart where it breeds bitterness and hatred, 'the fuel that drives the engine of witchcraft' (Ashforth, 1999:18).

Witchcraft, either white or black, stems from instability in the home/family; it is the enemy (witch) within ones family that betrays one. Though a witch works in league with other witches, the vehicle is the insider who initiates the attack; and so, as Ciekawy (1992) says, 'the strongest attacks come from within'. Witchcraft is, thus, placed within the kinship order and a familiar world, after all, *ame anwe ane anw*, meaning 'a man's loved one is his greatest adversary'. Rev Enyina (not real name) of Assemblies of God church, Eket, affirms the threat of witchcraft to family and kinship as elements of actual or potential adversary.

Owl, cockroach, bat, cat and snake are some of the common familiar symbols used to depict witches in Eket. Like the owl, witches can fly, and they are a sign of bad omen. They are detestable. Like the bat, they are mostly active at night, when they carry out their evil acts. Like the snake, they possess venom that harms their victims. As a cockroach, witches are beyond spatial bounds and can reach their victims anywhere irrespective of distance. Hence, Uduak, an informant and member of Showers of Grace Church (one of the churches visited during the study) attributed the retrenchment of her uncle, a police officer far away in Lagos, to the act of witchcraft that was masterminded by the victim's step mother resident in the village, whom she said had vowed that the victim would 'beg bread' because he did not buy her bread when he was visiting home, but bought one for his own mother. She said her uncle lost his job soon after that declaration. Witches can harm their victims from anywhere, but as Rev. Enyina maintained, sending them out of the house could limit their influence but cannot absolutely stop their operations.

Popular assumption in Eket is that only the ill-treatment of witches elicits confession from them. Sam Itauma, the president of CRARN, stressed that the belief is that if you torture a witch he/she would no longer be able to attack or harm you. This probably accounts for the injuries inflicted on them. Comfort Bassy Okon, a labelled child in CRARN, is a classic example of such torture; she bears the scar of electric iron burnt, inflicted by her elder brother on her lap. The injury was inflicted because she was labelled a witch by a pastor. Comfort and many others interviewed confirmed that they were beaten with *ekpin* (palm frond) and *mmiritan* (a type of grass similar to sugarcane) because it is believed that they (the *ekpin* and *mmiritan*) would incapacitate them and frustrate their witchcraft. This assumption is

not limited to Akwa-Ibom state, Luke Binniyat of Vanguard Newspaper of 30th November, 2010 raised an outcry for one Comfort Sunday in Akwanga, Nasarawa state who is now a shadow of her old self following the acid bath she received from her father for not confessing to the allegation of witchcraft leveled against her by one of her aunties. Similar cruelty was extended to 11 year old domestic help, Patience Ita Bassy, by her boss who stabbed her on her head over accusation of witchcraft in Calabar. The incident was reported in the National life Newspaper of 7th March, 2010.

4.8 The role of the church in detecting child witches

From the preceding discussion which implicated pastors in the child-witch saga, attention has shifted to the churches. The three churches, or 'prayer houses' (as they are otherwise known in Eket), visited, could be mistaken as a brand of 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. They promote interest in deliverance, an act designed to rid members of devil's influence (Meyer, 1999; Gifford, 2001; Stritecky, 2001 and Robbins, 2003). They 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 prophecy. The exorcism they perform is often symbolic, extending beyond prayers, to the use of symbols such as olive oil, lime and the administrations of concoctions accompanied by assignments and sacrifices in order to achieve the desired result of deliverance/ healing. These symbols have no bearing with those associated with witches' snakes, owls, bats, etc and cannot, therefore, be paired as opposites, neutralizing influence. But they have their meanings and significance, as we would shortly highlight. In the meantime, it is pertinent to state that the church ritual is a blend of indigenous beliefs and practices, with the modern, but tending more towards the practice by traditional healers.

Showers of Grace Deliverance Ministry is one of the three churches that were visited. It is a place where, in the perspective of the pastor, ‘every human problem receives kingdom’s solution’. The message is inscribed on the sign board hanging on the church’s building (see Plate 3 below).



Plate 3. Showers of Grace church, Eket.

The church building is located at No 16 Odugidem Street, off Afaha-Uqua road, by Etebi-Idungiwak. So conspicuously positioned is it that it can hardly escape being noticed by a visitor. The noise that emanates from the loud speakers hoisted on both sides of the altar, and the large expanse of land in front of the church, perhaps, acquired in anticipation of the multitudes that would congregate there weekly for church programmes, also arrest attention. The church building, which appears to me as a temporal structure, is constructed with planks, with a roof of corrugated iron sheets overhead. The hall is lined with white plastic seats organized into three rows. The altar is beautifully decorated with yellow and purple colour satin. There is a glass pulpit, fruity flowers and blue rug overlaid on the floor of the altar. At the far ends of the altar are two rooms. At the right side is the vestry, while to the left is the pastor's office where counselling takes place. The church meets on different days, for different activities. The researcher attended two of such activities related to counseling and prayer meetings and was able to meet with the Man of God one-on-one. The meetings scheduled for prayer and fasting were avenues for prophecies which the researcher had the opportunity of witnessing.

At 9 a.m. on Thursday the 29th of July, 2010, despite the heavy rain and the water-logged road leading to the church (it was almost impassable), members and non-members trooped in for counselling. The researcher, as others, got to the church drenched, and met others, numbering, over 70, already seated or standing within and outside the church hall. Many of them had come to be counselled by 'papa', as the pastor is fondly called by members of the church. The counselling session commenced with registration as everyone was directed to register at the desk, which is situated at the main entrance of the church and manned by two women who were seated on plastic chairs. It is the duty of the two women at the entrance to direct worshippers to the registration desk where people write down their names after paying a fee of N200. After the payment and registration, each registered visitor was given a pass or tally made of wood with 'Showers of Grace' inscribed on it. We were then led through a few sessions of praises and prayers by one of the church leaders before the counselling with the pastor commenced. Various prayer points were raised, as we awaited the commencement of counselling. Some of the prayer points include: "anybody who wants to sacrifice my blood on evil altars, oh God! Kill that person". We were also led to pray and thwart the plans of evil people who might sit in witchcraft coven for the purpose of postponing, countering or altering our blessings or

of manipulating our destinies and even trading (swapping) our faces in order to perpetuate their wickedness and bring ill-luck. The leader stressed that ‘anybody who does not pray the prayer is a ‘witch’. He impressed it on us to pray intensely, adding that “a closed mouth is a closed destiny”. Songs were punctuated intermittently with amen from an exhilarated congregation as it is believed that it is the intensity of the response that determines the result. The leader, who claimed that what he was doing was prophetic, raised several prayer points which were for a specific number of people in the congregation. For instance, he said “God wants to recommend fifteen people, five of them for employment and appointment, five for marriages, and the remaining five for contracts”. He further added another two for healing but failed to clarify if the two were additional or part of the initial fifteen mentioned. In our view, this classification could have been based on his assessment of the categories of people present and the assumption of their needs or problems. Business success, obviously, can and indeed constituted one of the miracles people sought in Eket as the bulk of the people that visit such churches are Mobil contractors who, probably, had not had any job in a long while. Another category of people with another social concern is the young ladies who needed spouses. To ensure no category was omitted, he wittingly included healing to incorporate the sick that are usually part of such meetings in desperate quest for healing. In any case, he stopped the prayer midway and said that he wanted to bless people who would seal their prayers with two hundred naira, which he called ‘exchange offering’. This is an exchange for whatever problems they had come to church with. As people gave this sum, he also reminded them to drop the tallies they were given with the man of God, as they went in to see the pastor. (In our view, it was important to do so because that could be one way of confirming the amount collected by registration officers).

Eventually, it was the researcher’s turn to see the pastor. A handsome young man named Prophet Paul Samuel Jacob turned out to be the pastor. He was gorgeously dressed in black suit with a yellow shirt and he was seated in his office waiting for the next person to come in. He looked somewhat stressed out, obviously from the long hours of counselling. The researcher greeted him as she entered and he offered her a seat. Before she could state her case, he said that she should pray for peace to avert the attacks she was having in her dreams. This, perhaps, is to prove that he is a ‘powerful man of God’ as her ‘problem’ was already ‘revealed’ to him before she mentioned it. This could be one way they assert their authority/control,

particularly as the need for diagnosis and/or solution puts the client in a subordinate power relation with the pastor, who exerts influence through his work. In any case, the researcher refuted his divination, but he insisted and added that she might not understand it (but how will a man understand another's experience in the dream yet claim the dreamer does not understand it?). He asked some personal and revealing questions (which may be one way of getting details about their clients that they eventually use during prophecy), and went on to say that she had been going through spiritual attacks and claimed there was an evil force responsible for those attacks. Finally, he gave her an 'assignment' which is that she should fast and pray and return on a certain date. As she was leaving the office, he collected the tally and gave her a white sheet of paper to hand to the ladies at the registration desk. When she gave them the paper, they asked her to sit down and recapitulate what the man of God had told her. They wrote down her name and collected her address and phone number promising to contact her.

While she was still seated, another boy who had just seen 'papa' came out and presented his paper which they interpreted to mean he should buy three bottles of olive oil. This, according to them, would cost nine hundred naira (apparently they also sell the oil). The researcher left the church at 5:30 pm. But as she was going out, she saw a woman in chains inveighing and haranguing imaginary enemies. She is obviously mad and has been brought to the church for prayers. This also points to the belief that every problem has a spiritual origin/answer.

A much revealing encounter occurred at another church, Mount Zion Light House Full Gospel Church. There the researcher was to witness the use of healing symbols and the act of money making. The church is a few poles away from the major Atabong road, around Nung-Usu lane. It is a small church located in a backstreet area, away from the glare of publicity, and constructed with planks and covered with tarpaulin. The building is unattractive compared to the modern magnificent church buildings scattered around the nooks and crannies of Eket. However, it holds attraction for the members and other people who congregate there weekly to seek remedies to life challenges. Its slightest resemblance to a church is that it has an altar and a wooded pulpit.



Plate4: Mount Zion Light House Full Gospel Church, Eket

The service which the fieldworker attended was one of fasting and prayer, and it began at 7 a.m. with the pastor, also referred to as Oku (Oku is synonymous with shepherd or pastor), leading in prayers. We all knelt as instructed, as the prayers were said in the vernacular. Songs were intermittently presented as prayers continued. The pastor, his wife and the prophets in attendance, all played key roles as events unfolded.

While the songs were still being sung, Oku collected a bottle of olive oil and dropped some of it on the altar as if that was required to commence ministrations. One of the prophets, who all the while had been leading the songs, abruptly turned back, called out one man and the wife from the congregation to the altar because, according to him, the man, who is a police man, was suffering from something that had been inflicted on him by a certain colleague that he loved so much. He ordered them to bring an orange, which the wife hurriedly sent someone to buy. When the orange was brought, it was cut into two parts; the prophet took the orange, pronounced *utibe* (wonder) seven times on each part and gave one to the husband, the other to the wife. They both ate it and were anointed and prayed for. The orange is expected to work wonders as pronounced by the prophet and will also bring the anticipated transformation or healing. Some other people were similarly called out but since the singing was still in full swing, we didn't hear most of the prophecies.

Soon after, it was offering time. Oku warned that not less than twenty naira should be offered. The money, he stated, was for 'Maria'. At first, the researcher thought there was somebody by that name on whose stead the money was being raised, but she soon realized as he continued, that the money was meant for the pastor and the prophet who 'ministered' and it is for the purchase of "aspirin" because, as he claimed, if we had gone to the hospital, we would have paid for consultation. Just as a sufferer or patient needing relief or healing from whatever causes pain or discomfort consults a specialist (medical doctor) who in turn prescribes or administers aspirin as antidote to alleviate the pain/ailment at a defined cost, so also members/people who consult Oku /prophet as 'consultant' in spiritual matters should be ready to pay the price, as well as comply with Oku's directives/instructions. Hence, the money requested by Oku and the prophecy/ assignment given to the people serve as the medium of exchange, one that heals the pain of the sufferer and brings the needed relief or healing. Following this instruction, the congregants began to drop money in the stainless bowl he kept for the purpose. As the congregation dropped the money,

the prophet stated that we had been blessed and, in turn, we should reciprocate. Oku then called for fund raising of ten thousand naira which he said would be used to fix the doors of the church. Those already prophesied to, complied with his request. Oku finally prayed and closed the service by 2:35pm.

As we came out of the church, the researcher saw a boy she knew (Elijah) who was seeking admission into a university. He was also coming from the church. As we exchanged pleasantries, and the researcher asked him about his effort at getting an admission, he said he had taken a post JAMB (Joint Admission and Matriculation Board) examination but that his result was not released. When the researcher inquired further, he said:

...my brother is the cause; one of my aunties, a member of this church, brought me here last week and the prophet told me my brother is responsible. He took my name somewhere that is why my name did not come out. It was the same thing last year. I took the exam, but my name did not come out; maybe he does not want me to go to school.
(Source: Personal fieldwork, February, 2011)

When the researcher asked what he would do about it, he said 'prophet gave me assignment that is why I have come for fasting'. Assignment, as is figuratively used in the churches, involves the various requirements/instructions given by the pastor or prophet to be carried out by the person to whom prophecies were given. It is aimed at, or believed to bring solution to, the problem the individual is undergoing when he performs it. His willingness to perform the assignment is indicative of his acceptance of the prophecy.

The third and last church we visited was the Tabernacle of Testimonies. It is a centre of testimonies as the name implies. The church is located at Ekereuwem Street, off Atabong road, Eket.



Plate 5: The tabernacle of testimonies church, Eket

Its conspicuous location makes it a major attraction which is evident in the huge number of people that has come to receive their share of the miracles or to express their testimonies. The fleet of cars parked in front of the church, including Mama's own black Toyota jeep, constitutes a spectacle of wealth. The jeep is conspicuously packed in front of the church, as the people say, to attest to the goodness of the Lord. The altar, well decorated with cream and marrow colour satin materials, invites immediate attention. In front of the altar is a glass pulpit; behind it is a new cushion chair called 'joy seat'. On both sides of the altar are white plastic chairs neatly arranged. To the right are the ministers' seats. There were eleven of them in attendance on the first visit. To the left are the prophets/choir seats. The musical band plays beside the choir. The pew is arranged in three rows, with men at the far right. The middle and left rows are occupied by women and children who are usually more in attendance at such meetings. The attendees comprise 90 adults, excluding children. The meeting had already begun when we (the researcher and her assistant) arrived but it was still at the preliminary session. We were ushered to the front row where other new comers were sitting.

A long session of praises was followed by testimonies which were rounded off by the woman of God, fondly called 'mama'. The Esit-Eket born Mama is one of a set of twins. She is a beautiful young woman of an average height. She commanded great respect from her members. She testified to how a girl said that she, mama, labelled her mother (the girl's mum) a witch. She noted, with a deep sense of pride, that if they were in doubt, they should come to her. But, rather, than come to her for confirmation, the girl ran away. That, she declares, is how our witches shall also run away. We all chorused amen three times, in brisk succession as is the manner. She declared that 'all witches must die by fire'! This was accompanied by amen! Thereafter, she resumed singing, ready to commence ministrations. As a prelude, she dropped olive oil twice in front of the altar, and continued with her song. But midway, she called out one man who had earlier given testimony, and ordered that two male ministers fetch him. As they were approaching the altar with him, she ordered another minister to intercept them in a manner that looked like the minister was an enemy set to obstruct the testifier from proceeding/progressing. It all looked like play acting. The two ministers pleaded with the latter to let go, but he was adamant. At that moment, 'mama' sent a prophetess to order the 'enemy' to let go. At her intervention, the enemy gave way and the man was brought to the altar where 'mama' told him,

“you would have been a star, but members of your family blocked you. Now that you have come to the church, your limitations/hindrances are all over”. This demonstration is significant; the intervention of the prophetess in the play acting represents mama’s mediatory role. Her declaration is a significant statement because it is indicative that the victim is in the right place for his solution.

The next phase of the programme involved a young man who, from all indications, was a prophet. He began by whispering to ‘mama’ as if he needed her permission to commence. He went round the congregation, as if to get a better view of the people in attendance, returned to the front row, tilted his head to one side, listening intently as though receiving instruction from someone, and then picked up one woman from the first row. ‘Mama’ was still leading in choruses. The prophet was assisted by two other ministers who interpreted the prophecy to the people concerned. It was said in hush tones so we could not hear what was being prophesied. But one could deduce the message from their actions. They lifted up their hands as though attempting to collect something, perhaps blessings as they were told by the prophet or placed those hands on their heads or pockets to secure the ‘blessing’. The researcher was not left out of the drama. She was called out and asked ‘where is your flower?’ Perplexed, she enquired from her interlocutor what he meant. He explained, ‘it is your husband’. Seeing the wedding band, he asked if her bride price had been paid. It is not unusual to ask such a question because it is common practice in Eket for a woman to live with a man not legitimately married to. Cohabitation is one of the banes of broken marriages that breed the child-witch menace, as we have already hinted in this work. When the researcher answered in the affirmative, and he was not getting any clue as to what problem must have brought her, he said that some members of her family were not happy over her marriage because they were not given drinks. This assertion is false, but it was artfully employed to insinuate something on which to hinge the transformation of the lie into authentic fact. This session continued for about an hour with ‘mama’ leading in song and repeating her slogan-‘all the witches must die by fire’! The prophet then bowed out for mama to take the centre stage.

Mama’s style of ministration is different from that of any of her prophets. Hers is punctuated with songs and dancing. For instance, she called one unmarried lady and said her family did not want her to marry. She was then asked to ‘sow a seed’ of one thousand naira on the ‘joy seat’ and the lady promised to do that the next Sunday because she did not come with that amount of money. But mama insisted it must be

done immediately and asked anybody in the congregation to lend her the money. A brother offered her the money and mama also asked another sister, an usherette, to also give her one thousand naira. With the two thousand held in both hands she came to the altar where mama asked her what she was holding. Oblivious of what was expected of her, she said it was two thousand naira. Mama rebuked her, stating it was 'double portion'. What she meant by double portion, here, is obscured. Was she referring to double husbands or what? Well, the observer or member was left to decipher. She was then asked to drop the money on "joy seat" which obviously belonged to mama. Another man was asked to wash his face in a bowl of water which one of the ministers had brought in at mama's instruction. He was told that witches had placed an accident on him. As he was being interrogated it was discovered that his father had a house under construction. She warned that he should not go close to the site nor contribute to its completion. In fact, he should not sleep in that house otherwise he would die. Such scary messages do not only ensnare people in the web of fear but also mar relationships as they could generate discontent from others.

Mama also claimed she had seen ten people whom God was giving visa and international passports to. She, however, did not mention their names but urged them to come and touch her. Nineteen people came out to touch her and she did not turn back the extra nine nor specify the ten. This is the trend in all the prophecies; nothing is specific or definite but is open to flexible interpretation. As they touched her, she said she had only seen one 'Id Card'. Looking intently there, there was a fifty naira note which, apparently, is the 'Id Card' (their words are coded; one needs to carefully observe or interrogate them to unravel their meanings). Understanding what she meant, they rushed back, spraying her with various denominations of naira notes. Next, she concentrated on the front pews where first timers were directed to sit on arrival. She picked out one lady and said somebody in her compound was to be killed through witchcraft, but the father of that person was a big wizard who had vowed to exchange his daughter with the new comer but since she had come to the meeting, there would be a reversal and the evil would return to the sender. (They make people believe their presence in the church is part of the solution they need; in our view, this is one way of canvassing /recruiting members). Next, a middle aged woman was called out by 'mama' and asked 'who is a teacher'? She thought for a while without responding. 'Mama' shouted the question again to her, as if to instill fear in her. This time, the woman shuddered and said her aunt (intimidation is ingeniously employed

to make people believe them). ‘Mama’ with a sense of accomplishment said “if this woman can do this to you, whatever evil she has thought against you shall return to her”! The congregation chorused amen as she raised another song and called for a ‘covenant offering’ to seal the ministration of the day. The church service came to a close by 4:15pm.

The second visit was on the 27th of January, 2011. We arrived early and were ushered to the front row. The band took the stage and led in a long session of praise. Much time is devoted to praise and prophecy here than at Showers of Grace where prayer is emphasized. The leader of service called for offering and ‘Mama’ came forward to ‘promote’ the offering by encouraging everyone to give bountifully. The offering collected, Mama expressed displeasure that we did not dance well, and that God was more interested in praises than in offering. With this, another round of offering was called for and collected, and, thereafter, testimonies followed. Four people came out for testimonies. Two of them told their stories; the remaining two turned theirs into songs. Mama was particularly excited about one of the testimonies. The testifier, an Igbo woman married to an Akwa Ibom man, resides in Port-Harcourt. She came to confirm what mama had said earlier, namely that she had been married for eight years but her mother-in-law did not want her to have children. The mother-in-law had been taunting her because of her childlessness. When she came to Eket from Port-Harcourt to meet Mama, her mother-in-law who was in Ikot Ekpene sensed it and asked her what they did there. Mama interrupted with wide gesticulation and a sense of apparent self-aggrandizement: ‘Since power pass power, the lesser power had to bow’ and this resulted in the birth of a baby girl. After this, ‘Mama’ announced that we had come to the ‘mount of testimonies’ and were bound to testify. She urged us to give what she termed ‘testimony offering’. She stressed that everybody must participate; if one did not have money for the offering, his neighbour should give him. She prayed over the offering and led the song thereafter. As she ministered, a young lady was asked to pluck some flowers which she did right away. She was told to put the flower in a vase with water. She was instructed to change the water daily to keep it fresh and with that her wedding would soon be announced. The lady told mama that her wedding had already been fixed. So she anointed her with olive oil and asked her to pay her tithe to her. The lady rushed back to her seat, brought out a white envelope that was already stuffed with money and handed it over to her. (This appears to have been preplanned because the wedding she was prophesying about was already fixed

and the tithes she requested was already packaged). In any case, 'Mama' continued and in the course of her ministrations asked five people to give her one thousand naira each. The researcher was one of the people she pointed to. Unfortunately, she had not got that amount with her, having given numerous offerings earlier. When the researcher told her this, Mama was visibly displeased. She stated that in spiritual matters "overtaking is allowed". By this statement, she implied that anybody who could give the said amount would take the blessings. Seventeen people came out for 'spiritual overtaking' with one thousand naira each. She left the researcher and went to another woman.

She told the woman that her marriage would be restored, but she had to buy five dozens of handkerchiefs which she would distribute to the elders and prophets while the remaining ones would be for 'Mama' herself. Then she called out those who were sick to be prayed for. Among them was a woman whom she asked about her husband. The woman said it was a long story so she asked her to choose between having her husband back and losing her uncle on whose stead she had come to pray for (apparently her uncle is supposed to be the witch obstructing her marriage). She continued for a long period of time before she considered the researcher again. She called her out, presuming she was in need of children, and asked her to pack children from the altar. She demonstrated the 'packing' act in the manner others did. Then 'Mama' asked her to confirm that that was what brought her to the church. When the researcher responded in the affirmative in order to get more out of her, she asked her to buy a 10 litre capacity can, fill it with water and bring it to the church on her head. She was instructed not to let the can touch the ground but should suspend it with something. She was also told to buy a basketful of assorted fruits, which she should also carry on her head to the church, with five thousand naira, which would be distributed in four envelopes, one thousand naira in each envelope but with one containing two thousand naira. The envelope holding the two thousand naira should be dropped at the 'joy seat'. The other envelopes should be dropped before the elders, the prophets and at the offering box. Lastly, she should buy clothes for children at the orphanage. 'Mama' then asked the researcher to appreciate her with money. So the researcher gave the last money she had on her person, but 'Mama' felt that the money was too meager, observing that 'if you were going to some other places you would have carried more money, but coming here, you did not come with enough money'. Shifting her attention momentarily from the researcher, she told one man in the

congregation that God was going to change his position. To ensure that this prophesy came to pass, she asked the man to buy five bundles of roofing sheets, but before doing so, he should give twenty thousand naira as part payment for the sheets, because between then and August the following year people would see new roofing sheets, meaning that he would build new houses as a result of the blessings that would accrue from his giving.

Finally, she asked congregants to sow “seed faith”. She called for twenty people to give two thousand naira each. At that point, somebody stood up to leave, but she called him back, insisting nobody must leave at that time. She reduced the offering to one thousand naira, but only four people came out. So, she began calling people by names or pointing at them. She called one of the elders, whom she said was opening his car, so she thought he had gone to bring money, but the elder simply laughed. But she insisted that he must give at least a thousand naira. She continued like that, reducing to five hundred, two hundred and finally, one hundred naira. To ensure everybody gave something, she called for an offering, dropped olive oil on the palms of people as she gave instruction to them to rub it on their faces as anointing for favour. She made some announcements and said the closing prayer at 5:45pm.

Following the trend of the prophecies, 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, etc.), forces stronger than the 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....’ It seems as if expectations are not met because forces greater than the individual are inhibitive factors. 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, as the prophetess did. The evil is parried away because the victim is in the presence of a superior force. This, we presume, highlights the relevance of the pastor/prophet to critical situations and their resolutions; their intervention is needed to enable individuals’ progress.

There are peculiar trends we observed at Obot Iko Ntiense. There is a constant use of symbolism. Words such as ‘flower’, ‘zinc’ (roofing sheets), ‘joy seat’, etc.

were repeatedly used to represent certain things, not unconnected with source of affliction or problem. 'Flower' was used on two occasions to refer to husband. This is presumably due to its close association with love in popular worldviews. 'Zinc' was used to depict new buildings/houses, while 'joy seat' was craftily used to give the impression that as people drop their money on joy seat, they will experience joy. "Seed faith" symbolized problem buried, but yet have the potential to rise again/germinate, subject to favourable conditions of the type that is prescribed by the pastor/prophet. The same goes for water, the symbolism of transformation of the bad to the good, because water can destroy and as well bring alive. There is also price tagging in the assignments given. Demands are made with specific price tags. An example is the man who was asked to bring zinc, equivalence of which is twenty thousand naira. The researcher was asked to bring five thousand naira with specific instruction on how to distribute the money. There is also the hidden nature of accusations as specific names were carefully avoided while general non personal ones were used to designate the 'enemies'.

4.9 Labelling process in retrospect: the means to capital accumulation

The process of labelling varies slightly from one church to another. There was no case of direct labelling of a child, perhaps due to the prohibition on child-witch labelling as a result of the adoption of the Child Rights' Act by the state government, which criminalizes stigmatization and witchcraft labelling against children. However, there were insinuations pointing to kins or colleagues or members, as was the case with one of the female ministers at Obot IkoNtiense whom 'Mama' warned about somebody she loved so much, lived with and treated as a sister but who had sponsored witches to kill her. She encouraged her to terminate her relationship with the lady immediately. Labelling has its root in accusations and the pressure to reject relationships: the step-mother does not want the step-daughter; the father does not want to see his son, etc. Once there is somebody to accuse, either the accused denies such allegation, or the pastor should be consulted again for verification. In most cases, especially those that concern children unable to defend themselves, the accusation/label stands. There is, in fact, a situational dimension to labelling, 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 Showers of Grace says, 'anybody who does not pray this prayer is a witch'. The prayer topic he raised at

that instance had much to do with thwarting the plans of witches, and the refusal of such prayers is an act of disobedience, tantamount to being a witch. Counselling is another process that leads to labelling because it offers an ideal occasion to extract information from a client. The information becomes pointer to the fears and suspicions of the counsellee and the possible interpretations of his/her experiences. Questions are cleverly asked to confirm/affirm a position, in such a way that answers are insinuated. For instance, at Showers of Grace, when the researcher admitted that she had some problems, it encouraged the pastor to probe further, looking for the evidence to prove his understanding of the situation and to justify the appropriateness of his interpretation.

In Obot Iko Ntiense, prophets/pastors employ motivational approach to psyche the person into believing what they, pastors/prophets, say. They impose their claims by shouting at individuals, in the researcher's view, to possibly intimidate and coerce them into submission. Other means, such as generalized prophecies and blessings, are artfully devised to ascertain peoples' problems and needs. For instance, when 'Mama' called out one pregnant woman and asked her to buy biscuit, she went out immediately and bought it. Mama opened it, gave her part of it to eat and called out all who were in need of children to pick from the remaining ones and eat. They all rushed out to eat the biscuit. Some of those she later called out for prophecies that had to do with barrenness were those that took the biscuit. When people come out for general altar calls, they invariably acknowledge they have problems, and prophecy brings out their peculiarities for identification.

Members and non-members alike look forward to prophecy, as one of my informants at Mount Zion, Miss Affiong, confided. She is not a member of the church, but she attends the prayer and fasting programmes because, as she said, "the prophet can reveal your problem when you come". She added that even though they also held prayer meetings in her church, it was not as 'rich' as that (the one she was undergoing), because they did not give prophecy but merely pray what she termed 'general prayers'. So obsessed are people with prophesy that, as Offiong (1983) notes, highly established Ibibio surreptitiously steal into spiritualist churches to consult about personal problems, witch attacks and request for prayers and prophecies. Similarly, as the researcher observed at Mount Zion and Obot Iko Ntiense, some non-members of the church would come in only when prophecy was about to commence. This development is not lost to 'Mama' who bemoaned the attitude of people who

came late to programmes. She said “people who only wait to come when it is time for prophecy will be disappointed today because by the time they come the service would have been over”.

Members tend to believe so much in prophecies that their authenticity is not doubted. Prophecies are received and obeyed unquestionably. Interview with Joyce, a member at Obot-Iko Ntiense, revealed that the 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 should be believed as an “oracle of God” irrespective of what he/she says, as it is supposed to have come from God. Prophecy has become an act difficult to sideline because it earns pastors social visibility and respect. 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 throw away their children simply on the advice/ instruction of the ‘man of God’. 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 as earlier stated in this work, 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 labelled (Mair, 1974). The victims are often people in close affinity: the uncles, aunties, step-father, step-mother, siblings and extended family members. This would suggest, as scholars such as Geshiere (1997) noted, that witchcraft is the dark side of kinship. Wilson (1959) also observed that family ties are the basis of witchcraft conflict. The craft is grounded on the perceived needs of people, as the cause(s) of their pains. From the information at the researcher’s disposal, 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 or loss, 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 clichés such as ‘covenant offering’, ‘testimony offering’, ‘breakthrough offerings’ and ‘exchange offering’, or through such other devices as fund raising, ‘Maria’, ‘consultation fees’, selling of olive oil, money dropped on ‘joy seat’, ‘seed faith’, etc. The prophecies required one assignment or the other to perform, which involved either money or exchange of materials. The ‘spiritual overtaking’ and ‘Id card’ are means of extracting money from people, and those who lack are forced to borrow to pay the demands as Abigail’s grandmother intimated (one of the reconciled families visited in the course of this fieldwork). 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. 10 Exorcism (*awu ifu/akoho-ifu*)

The opinions of Eket people are not unanimous on the issue of exorcism. While some believe that victims can be delivered, others would ask rhetorically ‘Who is the first known witch that has been delivered?’, implying that exorcism is elusive; its evidence is not concrete. One Ebitu, a retired civil servant and an indigene of Eket, stated emphatically that witchcraft is in the blood, and cannot be exorcised. In other words, exorcising the witch could amount to taking his/her life. This is corroborated by the clan head’s view that “it is better to kill a witch than to deliver/exorcise him”. Therefore, it presupposes that labelled witches in Eket should be lynched, maimed or killed outright as was the case of *Nka ukpotio* discussed earlier in this work. Other informants believe that exorcism can be achieved through spiritual help-seeking, via traditional doctors/spiritualists or pastors. Traditional doctors administer *esere* beans and/or give other concoctions to cause the witch to vomit the witchcraft substance, or *mbiritan* (ginger lilly or costus afer) was burnt at night in the house/room where the witch was kept, because the odour emanating from it is believed to be inimical to evil spirit as Daddy, the key informant at CRARN, hinted (confirming Ekong, 2001). However, two parents of labelled children that were interviewed said they took their children to churches for prayers. . Another informant, Pastor Emmanuel, of Voice of

the Lord ministry, Eket, speaking during the focused group meeting, maintained that prayer is more effective in dealing with witchcraft. He intimated that witchcraft is a spirit, and should be contended with a higher spirit (the Holy Spirit). He believed that for exorcism to be effective prayers had to be offered, and the witch must be willing to surrender all apparatus of her witchcraft and confess all atrocities committed including, mentioning the name he/she is called in witchcraft coven. What are the apparatus to surrender? And does this entail doing so by force, subjecting the children to cruel treatment for days or weeks as the children narrated? The so-called child-witches were made to fast, drink olive oil, and have concoctions placed on their eyes and ears to, supposedly, block them from “seeing or hearing other witches when they come to call them to the coven”, as the exorcist, Bishop Williams, claimed in the movie “saving the African witch children”. The street children revealed during the interview that they were beaten with *ekpin* (palm frond), which may stand for separation from evil spirit or *ayang* (broom) which stands for separation or cleansing, as brooms are used in homes to clear dirt, and so in this instance to extricate the labelled by driving out the evil or removing the substance that causes witchcraft from the body. If the substance fails to come out, it must be forced out, as Augustine Effiong (a labelled child at CRARN) asserted: “the pastor pressed my neck and punched my stomach to make me vomit”.

Other mechanisms of confession and exorcism are equally devised, as is evident in Cecilia’s story: the Pastor had to add a substance to her vomit to show as evidence of witchcraft substance and proof of a successful exorcism. It is worthy of note that no identical object represents the witchcraft substance, as the children intimated. Rather, different objects (pebble, battery substance, etc.) are shown to parents as evidence of the substance. In all cases, parents were absent when the said objects were vomited. And when the expected change in behaviour is not visible after exorcism, the explanation given by the pastors is either the witchcraft spirit of the child is so strong that additional fee is required to remove it or the child is irredeemable and should be abandoned to the street as was the case of Edoho (not real name), that Esemé, the second key informant in CRARN, reported.

4.11 The dilemma of reintegration

The overwhelming view is that it is safer to keep a distance from alleged witches that have undergone exorcism as no physical evidence exists to prove the fact

of having been delivered. Mr. Uyime, a driver and an indigene of Eket, puts the situation thus: *umo-udiaha mkpo mme awe idiomo, ana akana ayan ikpang* (meaning when you eat with a tricky person, you eat with a longer spoon). Eating with a longer spoon implies being cautious because there is suspicion and distrust of the other, and it is all because the spiritual healing/deliverance conducted on the witch cannot be proved empirically. When Mrs. Asuquo, a resident of Eket, was asked if she would allow her children to play with an exorcised child–witch, she declined, stating that “for the benefit of doubt, in case the thing is still there, I will not allow them, because I cannot be so sure if the spirit had actually left”. Similar uncertainty was expressed by Mr Udo, an informant, who said he could not give out his child in marriage to an exorcised witch because, as he reasoned,

The evil spirit (witchcraft) can be transferred into my own family through such union. And, even if he has been delivered, how will he prove it? How will the community see me afterwards? People will think it is because of money that I am doing it. So it is difficult, I cannot do it. (Personal communication: December, 2010).

The ‘body’ of the witch is evil, contaminated, and contagious, transferring from one body to another and not necessarily by birth, but by association and through food, as we have already hinted. But what is evil to some people is to others a conduit for money making. Money is good, but it could also be bad when its source is associated with evil. Just like the Bakweri’s response to the people who have become visibly well off by association with capitalism. They are seen as evil because their money has created problem of, and for, relationship. The general consensus is that the reintegration of the labelled into the mainstream of society is, in fact, very difficult. One condition given to parents by CRARN for reconciliation with their children is that the labelled child must be relocated from the compound/village where he/she was labelled to another where nothing is known about the label. Itauma (the president of CRARN) explained that this is necessary for the reintegration of the child. Visits to the six reconciled families proved this dictum is strictly adhered to. Though one of the families did not relocate, the child in question had to be sent to a boarding school in another local government area to forestall discrimination and stigmatization. During the visit to their family, the mother complained that he was not doing well in school. The researcher suggested he should be brought back home and sent to a day school for close monitoring since he had been away (he was resident at CRARN) from home for some time. But the mother explained that he had to “remain there, where nobody

knows his story". To her, there is a visible scar on his face that could betray him; therefore, sending him to a boarding school, far away from his locality, is to enhance his reintegration into the society. In spite of all strategies, however, once a person is labelled, the individual is unacceptable in the community, or there is difficulty accepting her totally into the community.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

CHAPTER FIVE

STREET LIFE AND RECONCILIATION WITH THE SOCIETY

5.1 The culture of the street

Various aspects of the street life culture of the child witch have been mentioned in this work. It only remains to examine their lifestyle on the street, and in an institutional home, according to our stated objectives.

At inception, Eket street children had their makeshift homes at Marina, a neighbourhood close to Management Housing Estate (MHE). It is a choice location in the town where the nouveau riche and the high-ups in Mobil, the multi-national oil company, reside. The location exposes them to the attention of the cream of the society and could elicit sympathy and support from them. On the contrary, they are constantly harassed, berated and taunted by members of the public and hoodlums that violate and intrude into their abode with intent to steal from and molest them. The hostility towards them escalated in 2002, when their makeshift houses on Marina road, opposite Qua-Iboe hotel, were demolished by unidentified persons who considered them public nuisance. They, then, opted for the more sequestered parts of the town such as the stadium where they took refuge at the consent of the security men, but with strings attached, as reflected in Cecilia's story below. At present, some of them are also sequestered at Qua-River hotel, formally owned by the state government, but now sold to private individual. The hotel had been deserted and closed for business. They retire there at night and come out to hustle in the street during the day. Some of their vignettes are insightful into the ordeals they go through daily.

Cecilia Joshua Simon is a young girl of about 17-years old. She has a radiant look that belies her present conditions. A closer interaction, though, reveals that she is an unfortunate child to whom the street has become a permanent abode. Cecilia tells her story in a mixture of pidgin and standard English:

My mother comes from Cameroon but my father is from Esit-Eket. My mother don go back and my father marry another wife. She use to beat us; she don't give us food. She use to send me to do work and fetch water, so I don't like her. I bin de stubborn, fight with her, and If she no give us food I use to collect her money go buy something. She no like me, she say me and my sister be wintch. So she carry us go Mount Zion (a church reputed for giving prophecy and a place where many find solace in issues relating to witchcraft). Pastor said we be wintch. He say he go pray for us. He collect five thousand naira from my father

wife. Later, he gave me four bottle of olive oil to drink and gave me one plastic bucket and said make I vomit inside. I vomit and he carry that thing when then dey comot for inside battery, that black thing, mmn hn! And put it inside that vomit, he come show people say I vomit that thing. Later my father carry cutlass and pursue us from house. We come Ikot Odiong, come stay for market with other children when them say them be wintch. People use to beat us, pursue us, for night, boys use to come and worry us. Later, sir (Sam Itauma), come carry us go Ikot Afaha but I don't like the place. So I leave my sister there come Eket. Here, I follow other people and stay. We use to sleep for stadium. One sir (Security man) use to allow us to sleep there, but sometimes he use to come and worry us (worry, as used here imply sexual harassment). If we no gree, he go pursue us, he go carry cutlass and say he go kill us. Other people use to worry us too. 'Mopo' people (Mobil police officers) de come too; sometimes they give us money.

Sometime I use to help people carry something for market, and them go pay me money. I use to help one 'sanu' woman (Hausa woman) that sell food to wash plate, but after, she say make I no come again because when people know say I stay for road because them say I am a wintch, them go pursue me, they don't want to see us. (personal communication, 2010).

Life is hazardous because the fate on the street is unpredictable. She is an object of economic and sexual exploitation, and even at the time of this interview, she and two others were pregnant. One of the girls, Emem, speaking through an interpreter, affirms she has had two children before:

I bi born two before, I no know where dem de, dem don carry am. Iyo o! ami ndionghoke o!(Emem is pregnant. She admitted she has had two children previously but does not know their whereabouts. Unknown people have picked them up). (Personal communication, 2010)

Hounded in the day, but turned allies at night, she gratified men's sexual passion. Blessing Effiong's story is not, in fact, different from hers. She has been on the street for five years. Her father, a pastor of one Mount Zion Church in Calabar, had divorced her mother and sent her out of the house on account of witchcraft label. Her body, like that of many labelled children, bears the scar of rejection; the hot oil meant for akara (beans ball) was thrown on her ankle. She bemoans the molestation she faces on the street, particularly as it also comes from fellow street children whom she expected would have been more considerate since they are all faced with similar experiences. Her story goes thus:

Aunty, living on the street is not easy o! People hate us; they beat us, pursue us and call us witch. Even the other people, the boys in Qua-River, (other street children, taking refuge at the abandoned Qua-River hotel premises) they beat the small small people. They collect them

money (the big boys beat the younger ones and extort money from them). If you no give them, they will beat you. Small small people will do work, thief money and give them. If not, they will use stick and rod and beat them. They also worry us. That is why we left that place to the stadium. If they come and you don't agree, they will beat us well well, carry stick and big rod pursue us. All of them will come and force us (the bigger street boys molest the girls, sometimes they gang rape them). If they see other people that come and find us, they use to fight them, but it is those people that use to give us money o! Yes, Stepping Stone use to give us money too (Stepping stone gives them some money weekly for their upkeep) but is not enough. As people don't want to see us, they throw us stone, curse us, beat us but some people use to dash us money too. Some use to come and find us in the night, after, they will give us money, that is how we get money for food. We know is not good, because of AIDS and pregnancy but If we stop to follow them when they come, what of the boys in Qua River? They will still come. If we don't accept, all of them will force us. That is what we do to survive here. (Personal communication, 2010).

She affirms that prostitution is a regular business. Even, if it should stop what about the boys among them? She queries. The girls eke out a miserable existence in the streets as prostitutes and the boys engage in all sorts of criminal acts, as Samuel's story reveals.

Fifteen-year-old Samuel Jackson hails from Afaha-Eket. He is the only son of the family of four. He adequately fits the proverbial case of 'if you want to kill a dog, you give it a bad name'. With visible nostalgia, he bemoans his depravity and separation from his siblings whom he claimed he had lost touch with. Samuel Jackson has a story, not unusual, about victims:

My father was a pastor in Apostolic church. When he was sick, my uncle say that I am a witch that I want to kill my father. They take him to a church and the pastor there also said that I am a witch. When my father died, my uncle, because he wanted to take over my father's house, drove us away. He said I am very stubborn, that I am a witch, and that I killed my father. They pursue me out. So, I went to Marina (a street in Eket) to stay with Uwemedimoh and other people, because I don't have anywhere to stay. I have lived in the street for three years now. I can't even go to our house again, because he has taken everything and nobody like to see me because they believe I am a witch.

Life here is not easy, people use to beat us, call us names and pursue us. We sleep outside, under the rain. To eat food sef, is not easy; we beg or do dirty work for people. Sometimes we even take peoples things. You know that when somebody is hungry, he can do anything to get food. Even these girls, men use to come and carry them, and give them money but you know the result of that type of

thing. See Emem now, she is pregnant again. Even we, the boys, our life is not safe here. Last year, one man Etebom (child trafficker) came and carry me. He take me to one man in Cameroon and collect money from the man. In the morning, we use to go and catch fish in the high sea. The work is very difficult for me and he did not pay me, so I carry his money and run back to Eket. (Personal communication, 2010).

The street life has turned each and every one of them into a commodity, an object for sale and for labour. Their creative power and prospects are merely reduced to marketable commodity and exchange for money. At every moment in a day, time and space determines the abused body's needs, as food, sex, shelter, etc. Some of these are conflicting, and making a choice can become a problem, particularly when what may ordinarily look good becomes bad in hindsight. Every street child's story is poignantly reflective of their social situation in the street.

Mary Udo, now resident in CRARN, recalls how she lived in the bush, sleeping on tree tops, feeding on raw cassava, maize, and palm fruits stolen from people's farms. Once, she fell off the tree and woke up with bruises resulting from the fall. Many like her confessed to stealing from peoples' farms to meet basic needs. The market serves as an abode for ease of scavenging from the gutter and the dust bins for something to eat. Regrets can come later. Hence for Rachael, a street-child, resident in CRARN, these are "wasted years". She blamed those still in the street for what she considered the 'wrong choice' they made to remain in the street. For instance, Emem, (a street-child) claimed that her friend, Happiness, had disappeared to an unknown destination. Samuel and Emman were trafficked to Cameroon by a man they called Etebom. To many, they are of no use-value, as one with harmful effects on the society. Their indiscriminate sex practices expose them to the dangers of contracting sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS which have been confirmed by some staff of Stepping Stone who took them to the hospital for medical check-up. They cannot, obviously, afford medical treatment, even though Akwa Ibom state government offers free medical care to children. Most of them have passed the age (0-5 years) of benefiting from that gesture.

Although street life places the children's lives at stake, those that are resident at CRARN attested that they no more engage in prostitution, stealing and drugs. This position was affirmed by the clan head who observed that the children at CRARN no longer strayed into people' farms and steal their crops. They, therefore, have reasons to be grateful to CRARN and Stepping Stone for giving them new lease of life. First,

the centre provides for their basic needs; food, shelter, medical care, education and skill acquisition, all of which those on the street still lack. Second, those at CRARN are shielded from child traffickers and hoodlums who capitalize on their predicament to exploit them in child labour. Again, effort at reunification with their families proves more successful for those reconciled from CRARN as visit to their homes revealed whereas the two children that were reconciled from the street (Anthony and Joshua) have absconded from home. In all, there is a remarkable difference between those that are resident at CRARN and their counterparts on the street.

5.2 CRARN to the rescue

The centre is situated on a large expanse of land with a large space at the middle designated as playground. The environment is structured to meet the basic needs of the street children. The infrastructure at the centre was donated by charitable individuals and organisations. Part of the land was acquired from the ten million naira donation made by the state governor Bar. Godswill Akpabio, when he visited the centre on the 9th of July, 2009. On the site are a total of six buildings, with the sixth still under construction. The office block is made up of four rooms, three of which are used as classrooms and the other as office. It was built by the state government during Governor Victor Attah's administration (1999-2007). The new building under construction came through the combined efforts of two public-spirited individuals. Another block of four rooms was donated in 2009 by a retired Canadian Mobil pilot. Two of the rooms are used as classrooms, one as a counselling room and the fourth as the office of the head teacher. At present the two blocks used as boys' hostels were donated by Stepping Stone (an NGO that partners with CRARN); one of them was formally used as female hostel but is now occupied by the boys. A newly completed and well-furnished female hostel with kitchen and refectory was donated by Zenith bank/UNICEF. The new hostel has greatly eased congestion, as the existing hostels were insufficient for over two hundred children resident there. The classrooms are still overcrowded though, as only five rooms are used for classes. As a result, and because of the rising cost of administration, virtually all the classes are combined, with a single teacher handling any two classes merged. This does not make for effective learning, as they are often too large for a single teacher to manage.

On week days, the children go to school. The bigger children, particularly those in secondary schools, attend schools outside the centre. Most of them trek long

distances to their schools, as schools in the immediate communities have refused to admit them. Some of them have enrolled in schools outside the immediate community to forestall discrimination and stigmatization. Some of the boys are enrolled in apprenticeship programmes such as carpentry, spray painting, vulcanizing, etc. The younger ones are mostly pupils of CRARN academy. Oftentimes, the children go to school without food, because breakfast is usually delayed till about 11 am. In our view, the delay is to make up for inadequate resources to feed the large numbers of children. Some of the children, particularly the younger ones, therefore, complain of hunger, and this affects their concentration in class as a result.

The staff comprises regular and volunteer members. The volunteers assist in the rescue of the children on the street. The regular staff (non-residents) report to work at about 8 am daily. On Mondays, when staff meetings are held, all the staff members, including the president, meet together. But other than such meetings, the president does not come to work regularly as he attends to other administrative matters outside the centre. However, he makes out time to see the children as often as he can. Other members of staff report at the appropriate quarters, where they work. The administrative staff members remain in the office, where they attend to their daily task which includes, among other things, attending to guests. The centre records regular visitors, as individuals or organizations come from within and outside the country. People who come to visit the children oftentimes offer them gifts. Foreign guests, including journalists, visiting the centre have come to verify the report contained in the child-witch broadcast.

Relationship at the centre is quite cordial. The staff members work as a team to ensure the well-being of the children. The children, in fact, address the president (Sam Itauma) as 'sir' or 'daddy'. They have access to his house, where they usually gather to watch movies. He knows most of them by name. Enobong Samuel Charles is the president of the children as of the time of this research. The bigger children assume the role of the 'big sister/brother'. The younger children are assigned to the older ones that wash their clothes, ensure they eat, fix their hair (for the girls), report to the nurse when they are ill and ensure they are catered for.

There are times the children have minor misunderstandings. For instance, during this fieldwork, the researcher witnessed two children Uduak (not real name) and Mary Bakasi (as she is called, for easy identification) involved in an argument over the ownership of an empty bournvita tin. In the course of the argument, a fight ensued.

Uduak punched Mary's mouth, resulting in the loss of a tooth. When it was reported at the office, Mary was treated by the nurse while Uduak was asked to kneel down and apologize to Mary. Afterwards, the two children resumed playing together again. The children are reprimanded verbally, or by minor punishments such as asking a child to kneel down, to correct them when they err. No strict corrective measures are employed because, as the workers claim, that will amount to child abuse. Since it was a precondition for employment, no member of staff is ready to risk his/her job, not even in the interest of the children they purport to care for.

At inception, Ikot-Afaha community objected to the location of CRARN and even hounded the children. Emman, one of the children at the centre, stated during the interview with him that, initially people did not allow them to enter their shops to buy things, but now they do. Also, one Ubong (not real name), a carpenter from Ikot-Afaha, and an instructor to some of CRARN children on apprenticeship, intimated that initially when the children commenced the training in his workshop, neighbours did not allow them to come into their shops to make a purchase. Some of his customers also extended the stigmatization to him, as they stopped patronizing him because of the children. But he observed that these days the children are gradually being accepted by his neighbours. The belief in witchcraft may remain prevalent; some members of the community are, however, gradually accepting the children as normal.

But some other members of the community still abhor them, because even those schooling outside CRARN Academy have to hide their identity to be accepted in public schools. Unfortunately, some of those who were sent on apprenticeship programme (spray painting) were sent out because the landlord and co-tenants of their master insisted they should be thrown out. They were denied the opportunity of acquiring skills needed to be self-reliant. A key informant, the clan head of Ekid Odiong, Obong Abasi Assam, once queried: "Why should Sampi (the founder of CRARN as he is popularly called in the village) harbour witches if not that he is a witch himself? All the people in that vicinity (of CRARN) are witches; if not why didn't they (the residents of CRARN crescent) protest the location of that place? I hate them, they are evil. If they come here I will kill them (he demonstrated the act of killing them with a gesture of his hand across his neck). As the clan head, I have written to the state house in Uyo to come and take them away". The position of the clan head shows that not all members of the community accept the labelled. Many

still have strong animosity towards them and perceive them as nuisance to the community. The researcher observed that no child from the community comes around to play with them, except an adult who usually comes to play ball with the boys. We eventually discovered, in the course of time, that he is one of the volunteers that help with rescuing the children from the street. In spite of the clan head's misgivings about the children, he admitted they no longer stray into people's compounds or invade their farms to steal their crops, as was the practice when they were on the streets. In the light of this observation, one could submit that the misconduct, stealing, was occasioned by hunger. The children had no source of support and had to device antisocial strategies to meet their basic needs.

CRARN's activities revolve around the three "Rs" of Rescue, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation. It rescues the abused and abandoned children, most of whom had been labelled as witches from the streets of Eket and its environs. There were also others rescued from the street but are not labelled. Usually, officials of CRARN go in search of abandoned children or receive information from good-spirited individuals or the police about abandoned children and then go on to rescue them. Sometimes, the labelled children were brought to the centre by their parents or other individuals for rehabilitation. Seven children were admitted into the centre during this fieldwork; while many were turned down when it was obvious that the centre could not absorb them because the facilities were already over-stretched. Some were, also, turned down when their cases were considered not genuine enough or there was no serious threat to the lives of the children involved. CRARN's rescue operation has reduced the number of street children in Eket, though there are some others who would rather remain on the street than relocate to CRARN. The interview with them revealed that, though destitute, they would not just grab any help offered that would end up enslaving them.

Samuel was at CRARN initially but later left. His complaint for leaving was that the food is not well-made and it came too late. Really, their meals come very late. So, most times when visitors come to the centre the children come around complaining of hunger and begging for money to buy snacks. Their meals are basically carbohydrate and some of them look malnourished due to lack of a balanced diet. Uwemedimo's worry is that being confined at the centre is like being in a prison. He was one of the first set of boys taken to Gospel village Abak. He was also taken to Edo state but there he instigated others to stray from the home. Some of the children

on the street have come to enjoy the 'freedom' they experience on the street; hence, it has become increasingly difficult to confine them in a home.

The visits to the homes of the reconciled children reveal that those reconciled directly from the street find it difficult to remain at home as was the cases of Anthony and Joshua, two children reconciled by Steeping Stone Nigeria (SSN). The children picked from the streets or brought by their parents are harboured and counselled at the centre for sometime before they are taken back to their parents; to some extent they succeed in their reintegration into the community. In some cases, the possibility of success is even enhanced when one or both parents come for the children themselves. One Sergeant Samuel Ebenezer, an officer with the Nigerian police, whose daughter (Victoria) had been labelled and had been at the centre, did so. He came for reconciliation on the 3rd of May, 2010. The reconciliation had to proceed in the presence of witnesses. The parents are required to bring a witness, preferable the village head or anybody of repute in their community, to stand as surety for the parents and as witness to the reconciliation. One requirement for reconciliation is that parents should relocate from the village/compound where the child was labelled. This is to forestall discrimination and stigmatization of the child when he/she is eventually reconciled. The NGOs (CRARN and Steeping Stone) support the families financially to meet this obligation. Other than the ones that come to the centre for reconciliation, CRARN also takes the children back to their parents.

5.3 Reconciliation efforts

The researcher was involved in one reconciliation exercise, which took place on the 4th of November, 2010. She arrived at CRARN centre around 8:45 am to join the team heading to Oron area (Mbo and Orue-Offong Oruko L.G.As) on reconciliation trip. The team comprised eleven male, four of them children to be reconciled, two German journalists that were visiting CRARN at the time, Sam Itauma, the president of CRARN, three staff of CRARN (the fourth one, we later picked up at Oron) and the researcher. We left Eket for Oron at 10am, and made a brief stop at Chief Medekong's house. He is an Oron chief married to a Briton. The wife coordinates a drama group (Oron cultural troop) that campaigns against the labelling of children as witches. They partner with CRARN and Steeping Stone Nigeria (the two NGOs in Eket) to campaign against the labelling of children as witches. We left his house at about 11am, leaving Sam Itauma behind to attend to

other engagements. We then picked up the CRARN coordinator at Oron, who is conversant with the area and speaks the local dialect.

We headed to Ebughu, in Mbo L.G.A. It took some resilience and courage to drive through the rough, undulating road leading to Asakikang village, the maternal home of Felix, a labelled child we brought from CRARN for reconciliation. (We chose to go to his maternal home because Felix had lost both parents). He was labelled a witch by his paternal uncle, whom Felix said had taken all the lands bequeathed to him by his late father. He said it was when the uncle had attempted taking the last piece of land and Felix had resisted that the Uncle devised witchcraft label to get rid of him. He said his uncle was influential in the village because he was the president of the youth's forum. Felix was rescued and brought to CRARN by a pastor of the Qua-Ibo church around the area.

On the way to Felix' maternal home, we came across a group of fierce looking youths, over fifteen in number, with some of them bare-bodied, wearing only shorts. Others were following behind, eagerly running to catch up with the group ahead. Each of them had a sharp cutlass, as though they were intent to kill. We became curious as to what their mission was, but we could not stop to ask because from the look on their faces, and the speed with which they were going after their target, any effort to interrupt or interrogate them at that time would amount to distraction and could be met with stiff resistance. David Emmanuel Uwem, one of the members of the team, who had been involved in rescue missions in the past, suggested that it must be witchcraft related matter.

Felix' home is a mud house with thatched roof. It is located along the road, with plantain farm at the back of the house. The compound is neatly kept. We met Elder Etumusuyak Bassey, Felix's maternal grandfather, and other family members. Seeing Felix with us, it was apparent that they knew where we were coming from. Surprisingly, we were accorded a very warm reception, which we least expected, since we were aware of how unkindly the people view witchcraft labelling. But one soon realised in the course of the discussion that his grandparents did not believe he was a witch, but only left him at CRARN to protect him from the hostility and ploy of his uncle. We stated our mission, and the grandfather accepted it in good faith. He said he was at the centre the previous week, and would be coming again by the end of the month. He pleaded that we should return with the child pending his visit. On this note, we finalized our discussion. But, before we departed, the researcher used the

opportunity to investigate the mission of those youths we saw, because at that point they were returning to the village. An elderly woman, who came in from the next compound when we had arrived, explained that in the village, when a person was accused of witchcraft, the youths, just like the angry group we had seen, would kill any goat they could find around. This, she said, was to implicate the family of the accused who would be required to pay for the goat, and in the process, produce the accused. But this, we believe, is based on the assumption that the labelled has fled the village. In a situation where the accused is still in the village, a mob action or what is commonly called 'jungle justice' may be applied on the accused. If he survives it, then, he needs not be advised to leave the village. With the discussion done, we departed the village at about 2 pm.

Headed next to Abiakwo Ebughu, it was difficult for us to locate the village as the roads were difficult and undulating. We missed our way, and had almost arrived Ibaka (a fishing port at Mbo L.G.A.), which is some distance away from Abiakwo, the home of little Moses, the child in our company, who could not locate his village, although he was eager and excited to go home, judging from the nostalgic look on his face. The little boy had left home and severed ties with his family over the years. Eventually, we found the compound where Moses lived with his mother in her maternal home. At first, people in the neighbourhood had difficulty identifying him, which meant he must have been away for so long or might have been thought to be dead. At last, members of his extended family came out to receive us. Many of them were surprised to see him coming out of the car. Having been curious about our mission, they led us to the backyard where the maternal uncle was sitting on a reclining chair enjoying the cool breeze. There is a typical village setting with trees scattered around the house and a small hut behind, where the women process palm oil. Though they were not processing any then, the big pots, the open hearth and the chaff of previously processed palm kernel suggest what the hut was used for. Moses, at this point, was speechless but busy scanning the crowd as though searching for somebody. However, he soon burst into tears when he was told by one of the women that his mother had died. He could not be pacified by his uncle's (Michel Edet Mkpá) admonitions or that of other relatives around. On the matter of reconciliation, the reason for which we were at the village, this could not be settled as nobody, not even his uncle, was willing to take him back in spite of our efforts to convince them.

The team departed Mbo L.G.A. and headed back to Oron to pick up Sam. On our way back, we decided to visit Urue-Offong Oruko L.G.A. The experience on this trip was not a pleasant one. The poverty-stricken community has no evidence of government presence as even the road leading to the area was impassable. It was narrow and bumpy, with the tar all worn out and culverts had emerged to the surface. At some point, we had to disembark from the vehicle for it to be able to climb over the culverts. To compound the problem we had a flat tyre and had to fix it before we continued. We became spectacles for villagers who looked out of their houses to catch a glimpse of us, for obvious reasons. One, it appeared no vehicle had gone through that road in a long time, as we did not meet any car along the way, only commercial motorcycles conveying people and goods to their destinations. So, seeing people driving into the village raised curiosity. Two, we kept stopping every now and then to ask for direction, which suggested that we were visitors and were not conversant with the area. We eventually got to Udung-Uwe village where Effiong Okon Isongiyime hails from. The story was complex for the little boy, who was picked up by CRARN at Ibaka in Mbo L.G.A. in 2008. When we got to his family compound, at the spot where he said his father's house was, there was no house, only debris of what we supposed were the rack and ruins of his father's mud house. Adjacent to the place were two boys sitting in front of a mud house watching us. We walked up to them and enquired about the whereabouts of Effiong's parents. Apparently, one of them, Okon Edet Isongiyime, is his cousin. We were told that both parents had died. We later confirmed from him and he said his mother had died earlier, and he was living with his father. We were told his siblings were all living in the cities- Calabar, Port-Harcourt and Eket. They promised to reach them and let them know where he was staying. Sam Itauma left his address and phone number with them, so that they could contact him at CRARN whenever they were ready to pick up the child. On our way out of the village, we were stopped by the village head, Chief Edem Uwem, who gave us the full account of Effiong's case.

The Chief intimated that Effiong's father had been accused by the villagers of killing someone through witchcraft, but he had denied the allegation. In revenge, his father had brought mbiam to curse the people. Mbiam is a potent object used in swearing oaths; it is believed to have supernatural potency to detect the innocent and guilty and punish an offender (see Offiong, 1991). In return, the whole village turned against him for bringing mbiam. He was attacked and his house demolished. In that

pandemonium the child, out of fear, had run out of the village to Ibaka, and since he had had no place to stay there, he joined labelled children on the street. CRARN saw them and rescued them. Apparently, his was not a case of witchcraft label, but since he had mingled with other labelled children he was rescued alongside them. This shows that it may not be every child in CRARN that was labelled.

5.4 The new development at CRARN

In recent times, CRARN has faced some challenges which have affected its operations. In August 2010, Cable News Network (CNN) visited Akwa-Ibom state to investigate child abuse and abandonment in Eket and other communities. They visited CRARN centre and were taken by the officials to communities affected by witch hunting tragedies and some highly endemic areas in the state where belief in child-witches still persists, in spite of the numerous advocacies carried out by CRARN and Steeping Stone Nigeria (SSN). CNN on the 25 th of August, 2010 broadcast the report of their investigation. The reaction of the state government via the commissioner for information, Mr. Aniekan Umana, who described the documentary as ‘hoax’, was outright denial of the existence of child-witches or abuse of such children. In the same vein, Governor Godswill Akpabio on the 30th of August, 2010, in an interview with CNN, in London where the issue of Akwa-Ibom child-witchcraft was raised, dismissed the evidence gathered by CNN, which includes, among other things, a labelled child, Nkoyo, rescued during the visit and brought back to CRARN, as mere exaggeration fabricated by mischievous people to undermine his administration and portray Akwa-Ibom state negatively. He accused CRARN and SSN of using the situation to dupe people. Sequel to the interview, the state government felt betrayed and accused CRARN and SSN of deliberate blackmail and ordered surveillance on the founders and members of the two NGOs (CRARN and SSN).

In November, 2010, the governor set up a commission of inquiry headed by Justice Godwin Abraham to look into various child-witch related accusations and abuse in the state. The commission rounded off its investigation on the 10th of May, 2011. The report is still pending. On the 17th of February, 2011, Steeping Stone Nigeria, CRARN’s major partner, terminated its partnership with CRARN due to some allegations regarding the conduct of one of CRARN’s senior staff member.

This decision by SSN affected CRARN adversely as SSN was the major partner providing funds in support of CRARN. The development put some pressure

on CRARN, though efforts were made to solicit fund from other avenues to support the children. This, however, is no longer necessary as the Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Welfare in the state, Mrs. Eunice Thomas, on the 16th of May, 2011, evacuated the children from CRARN to a special children centre in Uyo. The evacuation of the children from the centre has crippled the existence of CRARN, as it at present lies desolate with no child left there. However, when the researcher visited the centre on the 14th of April, 2012, the officer she met at the centre claimed they offered referral services to people who still bring labelled children to the centre.

5.5 CRARN in public view

CRARN is perceived by some parents as an agent of change and transformation, particularly for intervening and ameliorating the plight of street children. To them, CRARN's mediatory role has sanitized a presumably challenging situation by taking the children off the streets and reuniting them with their parents. As it does this, it deals with the price value placed consciously or unconsciously on the victim's body by rejecting the witchcraft label of the parents, pastors and prophets. CRARN's three 'R's' could be said to have achieved some measure of success, because some of the reconciled children (visited) are living happily with their parents. It can, however, be argued that the body of the labelled has, also, been commoditized by parents whose ground for reconciliation is the incentives that accrue from the body (the financial support parents receive from CRARN and 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.

To others, the value of the body is profitable in another manner. For instance, CRARN is seen as a sham, as expressed by Jerry's mum (reconciled family visited) who feels CRARN is insincere because, as she reasons, they use the children to promote their activities and interest without adequate requital to them. For instance, she complained that CRARN failed to fulfill the promise made to her son, by failing to pursue the scholarship promised him by the state government during the governor's visit to the centre in 2009. Her view is that CRARN exploited the situation to promote an advantage of the social capital of the body displayed in the media as article for exhibition, which could attract attention/recognition and financial support both

nationally and internationally. It was complained in other view that the organization profited from the social visibility and capital accumulation the labelled yielded.

Interviews with some members of the community revealed that, by denying the existence of witches, CRARN deviates from emic general belief. This deviation portrays it negatively in the community as a non-conformist organization that supplants indigenous belief for lure of monetary incentives. It, thus, becomes an evil that transforms social relations, defines or redefines them to gain calculated advantage. Some other members of the public share same views seeing CRARN as the opportunist that uses existing human problems for personal enrichment. Indeed, Evangelist Helen Ukpabio, speaking in an interview with Newswatch magazine, insisted that Itauma (the president of CRARN) ventured into “fight” against child labelling because of the money the United Kingdom government voted to fight child abuse. She reasoned that the child-witch scam was being used to raise funds from the international community for personal satisfaction. Barrister Victor Ukutt (Helen Ukpabio’s lawyer), in an interview with The News magazine, similarly claimed that with the money raised by Foxcroft on this issue, “things are looking up for the founders of the NGOs” (CRARN and SSN) as he claimed they are more comfortable now than when they met/started.

Until now, the government has by her generous donations identified with CRARN. However, recently, CRARN appears to have lost favour with the government that now accuses both CRARN and SSN 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 reported Akwa-Ibom child witchcraft affair as ‘one big scam’ masterminded by Itauma and Foxcroft (founders of the two NGOs that support labelled 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 and subsequent events, including the raiding of the centre by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on November 10th, 2010, coupled with the termination of SSN’s support, based on allegations regarding the conduct of one of the senior staff of CRARN, reveals the credibility gap and distrust for CRARN.

In spite of the criticisms, CRARN has done well in restoring hope to the despondent children by reinstating them. Their reunification, economic empowerment

and advocacy programmes are laudable efforts in rebuilding families and restoring order in the society. More importantly, the awareness created by the NGOs (CRARN and SSN) through the documentary (Saving the African Witch Children) was a landmark achievement that aroused Akwa-Ibom state government out of complacency. Notably, it led to the adoption of the Child Rights Act, which criminalizes stigmatization and child labelling. Their persistent outcries stirred the government into setting up a board of inquiry to investigate the child-witch menace and to take over the responsibility and custody of the bedeviled children.

But in all, 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/Prophets, Parents, traffickers, lustful men and CRARN) who had placed value on them in terms of the degree of 'usefulness'. Otherwise, it 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 and by various strategies exploit the situation through prescribed assignments. Charges are paid on them. 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.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, attempt is made to recapitulate the thrust of this work, exposing the latent and salient issues that have emerged in the course of the research and finally making recommendations that could serve in correcting some of the developments emanating from the child-witch saga.

6.2 Summary

This ethnographic study has focused on street children, a phenomenon which, although well addressed in literature, could be linked to child-witch labelling. The child-witch aspect has, so far, been largely ignored by scholars. This thesis is at one level of analysis a community study and at another level an examination of subcultures in churches and institutional homes which have contributed to the overall image of the dynamics of the problem. The study spanned over one year, involving observing children's behaviours at various times and in different circumstances. The research site was Eket, in Akwa-Ibom state, Nigeria, and the subjects were the Eket people with clearly definable values and norms. Within this context, the family structure is experiencing some strains, forcing a spillover of its contents into society as undesirable persons. Whether they are desirable or undesirable is not the focus here, but what is, is why the practice should continue in a modernized setting.

This thesis is organized into six chapters. The first chapter gives the background to the study, and states the research problem, which is that several studies on street children omitted the link between the phenomenon of street children and witchcraft labelling. It, also, highlighted the serious gap that children, in the discourse of witchcraft among Anthropologists, need to be focused on. The chapter further gives the direction of the study through its stated research objectives, which explored the norms of Eket people, and the motives driving child labelling in the churches. The scope of the study consists of Eket community, CRARN and the three selected churches. The second chapter reveals the stands of other scholars on the subject via the exploration of relevant literatures on the phenomena of social order, street children, and witchcraft. It explores witchcraft from various anthropological postulations, and raises the issue of witches as evil but left no consensus on what this

really means. The insight raised in the literature led to a theoretical issue of evil being located in capitalism, as a form of interpersonal and intergroup exchanges in which use value and exchange value play out as categorical definitions of persons and statuses.

Chapter three focuses on the research methodology, and details the procedure and methods used in gathering information. These methods include in-depth interviews, informal interview, key informant interviewing and participant observation. The last method being the most significant because, it captures extensively behaviours and attitudes that require close observation. The data gathered were presented and analyzed in chapters four and five. The insights provided in these chapters reveal that family disintegration is a contributory factor to the child-witch imbroglio. It also points to the harsh economic condition in Eket, resulting in poverty and culminating in personal discontent over failure in the struggle for advancement. It asserts that religious profiteering and elite's manipulation of the situation contributes immensely to the crisis. Chapter six rounded-off the study with summary, recommendations and conclusion.

The major contribution of this thesis has been that children are on the street as a result of the violation of collective conscience, "offort". The violation of the group/community behavioural norms deserves some sanctions/punishments. Children that break the norms, that is, that are stubborn, truant and disrespectful are labelled as witches, a critical definition which impacts negatively on self-image, future aspirations, status in the community, and relationship with the family and community. The study reveals that the family, when displeased with the character/behaviour of its children, turns them up to the church for clarification of whether they are evil or not. Answers are provided in the churches through counselling, prayer meetings, and deliverance services. The church becomes a 'spiritual clinic' where diagnosis and treatment of the evil can be obtained. But, when remedy is unobtainable, abandonment of the child is a way to exonerate the family from the atrocities of witchcraft. Before labelling leads to abandonment, there must have been, however, a conflict resulting from the challenges of opposing values of the person within and between groups.

Furthermore, the thesis argues that the human body, within the oppositional frames caused by values, becomes a commodity object with price tag/value, not only for pastors that derive financial benefits from the children's supposed 'uselessness'

through exorcism but also for parents and CRARN that exchange them/their services for monetary value and/or support. They are equally used for labour 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, as objects, are exploited, estranged and disassociated from their labour, at personal and collective whims and caprices, a commodity whose price is determined by market forces –the pastors/church, family/community within a depressed national/local economy creating serious unemployment. This experience fits into that of Commodity Fetishism, as bodies that are paraded as goods or services for ex-change. Their exchange value is relative to their usefulness to the beneficiaries.

The metaphoric ‘body’ is extrinsically and existentially, at the point of labelling, separated from the physical self which, having lost its essence as human is treated as a lifeless article devoid of the power of choice. It cannot enjoy the intimacy and sense of worth inherent in the organic unity between the producer and the product. So, in capitalism, it can be exchanged for money given out as wages or incentives, aimed at motivating the producer to produce more for exchange value. This is obvious in the stipends given to street children by their exploiters who use them to accomplish their desires. It is also evident in the ‘interest’ shown by pastors who recommend exorcism, pretending to have genuine concern for the children, but actually concealing an unquenchable desire for accumulation of wealth and prestige through the enterprise. To those who perceived them as useless they are evil and detestable; some even think they should be eliminated entirely because they are dangerous to the society by their power to evoke disorder.

6.3 Conclusion

The following conclusions emanated from the study: witchcraft labelling could not have strengthened social order in Eket/Ibibio society, even though it supports indigenous values by condemning deviation and defining acceptable behaviours. The recent child-witch problem, as captured in this work, is not merely the effort of the community to recapture and reinforce waning communal norms and values, but equally an expression of the waning value of brotherhood, mutual assistance and genuine care for the afflicted due to exploitation of economic reality and misuse of power, privileges and positions. In the long run this work is a serious indictment of arbitrary principles. Thus, the persistence of child labelling and

abandonment, in spite of the enactment of the Child Rights Act by the state government, is indicative of the extent a society has gone operating on ad-hoc basis. In this sense of its arbitrariness, witchcraft labelling is antithetical to the construction of social order, and the presence of the children on the street constitutes a threat to order and a negation of morally valid positions held by each of the stakeholders.

6.4 Recommendations

The solution to Akwa-Ibom child witchcraft can neither rest in appealing to belief in witchcraft as part of emic world view nor in situating it solely as a consequence of the violation of behavioural norm. It would have to be accessed and appraised also on the destructive and devastating effects on the victims and the community/society at large. In view of this, the following recommendations are made to all stakeholders in this child-witch matter:

- i. Conscientious efforts should be made by governments and human rights activists to enlighten parents and community leaders on parental responsibilities and the rights of children.
- ii. Government agencies and other Child protection agencies like UNICEF and NAPTIP should be strengthened financially to effectively respond to, protect, prevent and prosecute violators of the rights of children.
- iii. Government should strengthen her child protection system by ensuring the implementation of the Child Rights Acts that was adopted by Akwa-Ibom state government, and by creating awareness of the existence of the act.
- iv. Akwa-Ibom state government should ensure that the Ministry of Social Welfare takes adequate care of the children under her custody. They should avoid playing politics with the welfare of the children.
- v. Churches/prayer houses should be duly registered and their activities regulated by the government or any agency designated by the government.
- vi. Training and reorientation programmes that highlight the roles of Pastors as shepherds should be introduced by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).
- vii. Pastors should be made to refrain from spreading scary messages of witchcraft and concentrate on the propagation of the gospel as was demonstrated by the love and care which Jesus Christ epitomized.

- viii. Churches/pastors should be incorporated into the campaign against child witches as they have considerable influence and can reach wide audience.
- ix. Poverty eradication and economic empowerment programmes that will boost the finances and enhance economic emancipation of families should be instituted to combat the excruciating poverty that initiated the child-witch menace.
- x. Parents should effectively play their roles in inculcating societal norms and values in children.
- xi. Children, on their part, should obey their parents and abide by their instructions.
- xii. Access to justice should be made easy to the labelled and culprits; this should be prompt and expedited.
- xiii. Efforts to reunite the children with their parents and reintegration strategy should be developed to ensure they are integrated properly into the mainstream of the society must be encouraged.
- xiv. Abuse and stigmatization of labelled children should be made punishable under the law.
- xv. The NGOs working with labelled children should be monitored and evaluated by donor agencies such as UNICEF to ensure proper disbursement/management of fund for their intended uses/ purposes.
- xvi. Opinion leaders in Eket should review bride wealth and scrap the extravagant and unwholesome demands made to prospective suitors by parents.
- xvii. Dialogue with community/opinion leaders and reorientation programmes by the NGOs and child protection agencies should be initiated and sustained.
- xviii. Advocates of child rights should understand the local context and give credence to emic communal value system.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Abasi	God
Abio-ekpuk	the spiritual or invisible world
Abudbit	black
Abu ite enyi Ekid	three central beams own Eke
Adro-bod	physical/visible world
Afia	white
Agaba boys	street boys of Calabar
Akam	prayer
Akai –Edoho	evil forest
Akara	beans ball
Aladura	spiritualist church otherwise called cherubim and seraphim
Almajiri	acolytes of Islamic teacher often sent out to the street to beg for arms.
Ami ndionghoke	I don't know
Atinga-	witch hunters from Ghana
Awu/akoho-ifu	Exorcism
Ayang	broom
Doorye	untamed- used to designate street children in Ethiopia.
Edisangaspirit	Holy Spirit
Ekpin-	palm fronds
Ekpo akpaanyi,	(a proverb) the dead hears/listens though their eyes may be closed.
Ikpaha Utong	
Emic	anthropological register, used to describe a perspective that derives from the native/subjects point of view
Esere	a leguminous beans given to witches that induces them to vomit the witchcraft substance.
Idiok ayiu	bad/evil child
Ifu/ifot	witch (Eket/Ibibio)

Malalapipe	pipe children used in Zulu language to refer to street children that hideout/reside under pipes.
Malunde	a term used by the Zulu of South Africa to refer to street children
Mbiam	is any potent object used in swearing oaths
Mmiritan	ginger lily, a type of grass used in beating witches
Muyaaye	out of control, used in Uganda to describe street children
Moineaux	term used to designate street children in the Democratic Republic of Congo
Nka Ukpotio	youths from the respective villages involved in witch-hunting
Nwa-ilo	child of the street or wayward child in Delta-Igbo translation
Obong-awan	a title given to women of repute in Akwa-Ibom, literally translated, it means king of women or women leader.
Obot Iko Ntiense	tabernacle of testimonies
offort	unwritten traditional injunction, it embodies the norms and values of Eket people
Oku	shepherd or pastor
Sanu	used in Eket to designate the Hausas
Sksdukinders	used by the Afrikans of South Africa to refer to street children
Utibe	wonder
Watoto wa mitaani	Kenyan term for street children

ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CNN	Cable News Network
CRARN	Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crime Commission
EWD	Empowering Widows in Development
HIV	Human Immune Virus
HRH	His Royal Highness
JAMB	Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board
L.G.A	Local Government Area
MHE	Management Housing Estate
NAPTIP	National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
SSN	Stepping Stone Nigeria
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

QUESTION GUIDE FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

1. What are children to the family?
2. What is the image of parents whose children are not well catered for?
3. How is a child who has disappointed his family by engaging in violent/anti social acts such as stealing, stubbornness, disobedient or destructive acts regarded/perceived?
4. What image or names do you call someone who engages in the above listed behaviours?
5. What roles are children expected to play in their families?
6. What are the acceptable behavioural patterns of adults in Eket society?
7. How does Eket/Ibibio perceive a witch?
8. What are the attitudes of Eket people towards a witch?
9. Are there ways of exorcising/removing witchcraft out of the victims?
10. Are exorcised (delivered) witches likely to be accepted back into the society and what is their level of acceptance in the community?
11. What sources of help do people seek in matters relating to witchcraft?
12. When and in what situation are other labelling acts other than witchcraft encouraged?
13. What in your view are the motives behind labelling?
14. Does labelling children as witches portray any form of disorder? Does it negate normal working of the society?
15. What is the relationship between labelling and street children?
16. How does the public perceive street children?
17. Would you be happy to see your child living on the street? If yes why, if no why not?
18. Can a child that had been labelled be relabelled should the behaviour change?
19. Why are labelled children sent out of their homes? Does abandoning the children solve the problem? Does it limit their evil workings on their families/communities?
20. Do you think the church/police or any corrective institution can change the behaviours of labeled children, if yes how/if no why not?

GUIDELINE QUESTIONS FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW

1. What are the dos and don'ts (norms and values) of Eket people?
2. What behaviours are expected of children in Eket?
3. Does deviation from such behaviours attract any punishment?
4. What kind of punishment do you give to people who violate norms?
5. How do Eket people perceive a family that has no child?
6. How important are children and what roles do they play in the community?
7. How do Eket people perceive a witch?
8. What are the observable attributes of a perceived witch?
9. What are the attitudes of Eket people towards an accused/ known witch?
10. Are there ways of removing witchcraft out of the victim? If yes what are some of the ways
12. Why are children labelled as witches in Eket?
13. Who label the children, and why are they labelling?
14. What in your view are the motives behind labelling?
15. Does a witch pose any problem to the community? What are the problems and how do you solve them?

**GUIDELINE QUESTION FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION
(COMMUNITY)**

- (1) What is the expected behavioural pattern for children in Eket. Does deviation attract sanction? What kind of sanction?
- (2) How do Eket people perceive a witch?
- (3) What are the attitudes of members of the community towards a known/accused witch?
- (4) Why are children labelled in Eket?
- (5) Does a witch pose any problem to the community? What are the problems and how do you solve them?
- (6) What in your view are contributory to this child witch problem?
- (7) What role has the family/community played in ameliorating this problem?
- (8) What kind of help do people seek in issues and relating to witchcraft?
- (9) Can a witch be exorcised? If Yes How?
- (10) Can the exorcised child be normal again?
- (11) How does the society perceive street children?
- (12) Does sending them out solve the problem?
- (13) Are labelled children likely to be accepted back into the community after exorcism? What is their level of acceptance?
- (14) Why are labeled children abandoned/rejected by their families?
- (15) What are the effects of labelling on the children?

GUIDELINE QUESTION FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

(PASTORS)

- (1) What is the role of the church in the society, and how well has the church played her role?
- (2) In view of the economic crisis in the country, how do you meet up with your financial obligations as a Pastor?
- (3) Do you think a witch can be delivered? How?
- (4) What role do Pastors play in labelling children?
- (5) What is the motive behind it?
- (6) How long does it take to deliver a child, and are there conditions necessary for deliverance to be effective? What are the conditions?
- (7) Do you charge money for exorcism? if yes why, if no why not?
- (8) What in the character of the children portray them as witches?
- (9) How best can you help a labelled child?
- (10) Are exorcised witches accepted back into the community? If yes why, if no why not?

LIST OF INFORMANTS

1. Pastor Chris Nyong, Pastor of Wilderness Voice Chapel Eket. Personal communication, March 2010.
2. Sam Itauma, president of CRARN. Personal communication, March, may and July 2010.
3. Regina Essien Bassy, Labelled child at CRARN. Personal communication, April 2010.
4. Mr Monday Jacob Udo, resident officer at CRARN. Key informant, May, June, August, September, November 2010.
5. Sergeant Samuel Ebenezer, police officer and father of a reconciled child. Personal communication, May 2010.
6. Miss Esemé Nnyangha Akpaumoh, staff of CRARN, (key informant) Personal communication, May, June, August, and November 2010.
7. Obong Abasi Assam the clan head of Eki-Odiong. (Key informant), Personal communication, April, June and August 2010.
8. Chief Nmma Edohoseh, village head of Uda Ikot Afaha. Personal communication June 2010.
9. Chief Henry Itauma Uwem, village head of Ikot Afaha. (Key informant) Personal communication, May, June and September 2010.
10. Cecilia Joshua Samuel, labelled child on the street. Personal communication, 2010.
11. Anthony's mother, parent of a reconciled child, Idung-udo. Personal communication, June 2010 and September 2011.
Samuel Jackson, labelled child on the street, Personal communication, 2010.
13. Alice Uwem Smart Labelled child on the street. Personal interview, March, 2011.
14. H.R.M. Edidem, T.P. Enodien (Ph.D) Paramount ruler of Eket and Chairman, Akwa-Ibom state traditional rulers' council. Personal communication, July 2010.
15. Esther's father, parent of a labelled child brought to CRARN. Personal communication, July 2010.

- 16 Rev N.J., Udoka, Pastor of Qua Iboe church, Ikot Odiong. Personal communication, July 2010.
- 17 Mr. U. Abangasanga, a driver and a parent. Personal communication, July 2010.
- 18 Christiana Akanimoh, member of Showers of Grace church. Personal communication, July 2010
- 19 Augustine Effiong, labeled child at CRARN. Personal communication, August 2010.
- 20 Ubong (not real name) Carpenter and instructor of CRARN children on apprenticeship programme. Personal communication I, August 2010.
- 21 Abigail's mother, parent of a reconciled child, Ekpene-obo, Personal communication August 2010.
- 22 Mrs. Samuel, Civil servant, resident in Eket. Personal communication, August 2010.
- 23 Prophet Effiong Etim Obisung parent of a labeled child. Personal communication, August 2010
- 24 Dr Mrs.Akpaime (not real name), pediatrician at the Community Health Centre, Okon- Eket. Personal communication, September 2010.
- 25 Jeremiah Victor Friday, a reconciled child at Eket. Personal communication, September 2010.
- 26 Mr. and Mrs. Victor Friday, parents of a reconciled child. Personal communication, September, 2007.
- 27 Mary Samuel Udoh, labeled child at CRARN. Personal communication, September 2010.
- 28 Obong-awan William, Principal Nursing Officer and women leader, Okon, Eket. Personal communication, October, 2010.
- 29 Dr Otu, Retired Mobil staff, and businessman. Personal communication, October, 2010.
- 30 Idung Stephen Friday, labelled child at CRARN. Personal communication, November, 2010.
- 31 Enobong Samuel Charles, labelled child and the president of the children at CRARN. Personal communication, November 2010.

- 32 Rachel, Prince Uche Labelled child at CRARN. Personal communication, November 2010.
- 33 Emman, labelled child at CRARN. Personal communication, November 2010.
- 34 Felix Etim Usuyak labeled child at CRARN. Personal communication, November 2010.
- 35 Mrs Agnes Okon (not real name) Felix aunty. Personal communication, November 2010.
- 36 Blessing, labelled child on the street. Personal communication, November 2010.
- 37 Emem labelled child on the street. Personal communication, September, 2010.
- 38 Otobong Akwaime labelled child on the street. Personal communication, November 2010.
- 39 Anna, (not real name) a teaching staff with CRARN academy, Ikot-Afaha (focused group). Personal communication, September, 2011.
- 40 Emem, a staff of CRARN (female counselor). Personal interview, November 2010.
- 41 Pastor Victor, indigene of Effoi (focused group) Personal communication November, 2010.
- 42 Uwemedimo, labelled child on the street Personal communication November 2010.
- 43 Mr. S.J. Udo, a parent and indigene of Idung-udo. Personal communication, December, 2010.
- 44 Mrs Akwa, a nursing staff with Immanuel general hospital Eket. Personal communication, December 2010.
- 45 Rev Enyinna, (not real name) Assemblies of God pastor, Eket. Personal communication, January, 2011.
- 46 Obong-awan Edoho, (not real name) women leader, Idung-Inan, Eket. Personal communication, (focus group discussion) January, 2011.
- 47 Mrs. Joyce Inyang, a trader and member of Obot Iko Ntiense. Personal communication, July, 2010.
- 48 Miss Affiong, a teacher, and resident in Eket. Personal communication, February, 2011.

- 49 Elijah, a student resident in Eket and an informant at Mount Zion. Personal communication, February, 2011.
- 50 Jane Sam Bassy, labeled child at CRARN. Personal communication, February 2011.
- 51 Esther Wilson a nurse and resident of Idua Eket, personal communication March 2011.
- 52 Emem Sunday Udota a teacher and resident of Eket , personal communication interview, March 20.
- 53 Samuel Moses, indigene of Idung Offiong, personal communication April, 2011.
- 54 Obong Monday Bassy Inyang, an indigene of Ikot-Usokong interview April 2011.
- 55 Christina Ernest Asuquo mother and indigene of Okon-Eket , personal communication, April 2011
- 56 Arthur Glory Doglas, a trader and indigene of Ikot Odion, personal communication, May, 2011
- 57 Ime, a business man and indigene of Ikot Afaha. Personal communication, June 2011.
- 58 Ete Udoh, a retired banker and indigene of Eket. Personal , communication interview, June 2011.
- 59 Mr. Ebitu, a retired civil servant and indigene of Eket. Personal communication, June 2011
- 60 Mrs. Asuquo a resident of Eket. Personal communication , June 2011.
- 61 Solomon Wilson father, indigene of EKET, Personal, communication, June 2011
- 62 Uduak, Okon Akpan, resident of Eket, Personal, communication, June 2011
- 63 Pastor Emmanuel Etim Ime, (not real name), Voice of the Lord Ministry, Eket. Focused group discussion, September 2011.
- 64 Emem Udo Ibanga, a civil servant. Focused group discussion, March, 2011.