

Confessions of wizards

■ 5 men own up to killing own children, others



• Michael Charlie -standing left- trying to explain himself to a member of the community, The goat he wanted to kill is lying down beside him while the youths listern

FROM JOE EFFIONG, UYO

For the people of Idiaba Ikot Udotan in Nsit Atai local government area of Akwa Ibom State, the last Christmas was a period of communal deliverance from the bondage of witches and wizards.

It was a period where five old men who claimed to be elders of the wizards' coven, which they call *Nka Ibak* (wicked association) freely came out to confess their atrocities.

Nobody in the community had suspected that the very religious Sunday Charlie, Michael Charlie who are blood brothers, Edet John Tom, Noah Akpanakpan and Udo Edet Tom, have any link with the death of their own children and other evils ravaging the community since in the past 10 years.

Relief however came to the

community through the mysterious death of one Miss Imaobong Charlie, a daughter of one of the wizards, who took ill immediately she returned from Aba where she went to buy some goods (ladies' clothes) to sell during the Xmas season.

It was learnt that the lady, a widow, who had earlier lost her Hausa husband, forcing her to return to her family home, had taken ill on 22nd and died on December 23. Attempt by the father to bury her the same day attracted suspicion and as a result, the community blocked him from burying the corpse.

While that was going on, another child of one of the wizards was battling with death alleging that his father had tied him and was about to kill him.

As a result of the alarm, the youths of the community besieged the compound only to behold the man tying a white goat,

which was later realised that he was to kill as a spiritual replication which would have resulted in the son's death.

When confronted, the man allegedly admitted that he wanted to kill the son by killing the goat, pretending it was for Christmas celebration.

"When the youth tortured him, he confessed that he was a wizard and that they were many in the community. It was he who mentioned the other four members of the group who the youth immediately swooped on, but they were saved by the elders", the acting village head of the community, Chief Charles Akpan, told *Saturday Sun*. He added that when the five men confessed to wizardry after the youths had stormed their compounds, the community elders had to rush to the police division at the local government headquarters, Odot, but the police declined involve-



• Emem Sunday Charlie, rescued

ment, saying they didn't want to get involved in spiritual matters.

"We had to summon the entire village to listen to them which confessed and promised that those they had held in captivity would be released. They came with the white goat through which one of them wanted to kill his son," Chief Akpan said.

It was gathered that, to confirm whether the five men were actually wizards, a child who had been claiming to be a witch in the neighbouring community was brought and she identified all the five men as members of her coven.

According to him, "One of them who wanted to deny being involved soft-pedaled immediately the little girl came round and commanded them to speak up. It was there that all of them agreed that on December 29, they would set free six young men and women that they had planned to kill before the end of January.

"So by midnight of that day, we, the elders, went to where they directed us; they had bought another goat and other items which they said would be used for deliverance. And they conducted the deliverance in their own way. It was as if we were watching Nollywood. If we had known we could have contracted

a video camera man to cover it. They went through spiritual protocol unimaginable to us the laymen; killed the goat, mixed the blood with palm wine, native gin plus some other concoction and drank among while sitting on logs on banana stems. After this they took an oath that those they held captives had been freed and that no young person would henceforth die in the village through their manipulations.

"To tell you the truth, I was afraid; and I immediately felt like leaving the village and return to where I used to reside until my father died and I was asked to come home and be the interim village head till a new one is appointed," Akpan said.

He said but for the maturity exhibited by the elders, the youth would have killed the wizards and that could have plunged the community into a serious problem since the police who had earlier declined intervention, would have descended on the village to arrest people. Those who the wizards claimed to have been held captives for killing, would equally not have been rescued because if any of the wizards had been killed the process of recuing their captive would have been blurred impossible.

One of those held captive by his wizard father and was equally rescued, an 18-year old Emem Sunday Charlie, expressed delight that he and the entire family had be rescued from the witchcraft gulag that their father, Sunday Charlie, had dragged them into.

Emem, an electrical technician, who resides in Port Harcourt, told *Saturday Sun*; "We used to have bad dreams in the entire family. Our father once said he had sold our sister to a spirit husband as such she would wake up naked every night even when she was well dressed before going to bed. And I personally used to experience severe pains in the neck. But after they delivered us, the pain is no more."

The entire village is now waiting to see whether the atrocities the old wizards used to cause at the end and beginning of every year, would stop, or whether the deliverance was a ruse to momentarily save their neck from the irate youths. But the youths have vowed to kill them should any anything happen to any young person in the village or outside henceforth.



• Chief Charles Akpan, the acting village head of Idiaba Ikot Udotan