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Ritualists invade Ebonyi

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BY HENRY UMAHI (KINGHENRYSUN@YAHOO.COM ON JUNE 21, 2014 ·

NATIONAL

■ Mother loses two children in one night

■ Shrine where ritual killings take place discovered in Ishiagu community

■ Human parts sell for between N500,000 and N1million

Recently, the Ishiagu community in Ivo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State erupted, following the discovery of a shrine where ritual killings allegedly took place.

It was gathered that when the nefarious activities going on in the shrine were exposed, youths of the community went wild and destroyed the shrine as well as the property of the Chief priest and two suspected agents (names withheld by us) from Ngwogwo community. Among the items recovered from the shrine is a picture of the Chief priest holding something that looks like a human hand as well as a register said to be containing the names of the people who had been killed by the evil men and those yet to be killed.

And to prevent the situation from getting out of hand, the police stormed the community and arrested some people.

When the reporter went to Ishiagu on May 7, there was apprehension in the air. Apparently gripped by fear, the villagers kept sealed lips. Even the traditional ruler, HRH Eze Lawrence O. Chukwu, Ibina 1 of Okue autonomous community, an old fellow, claimed that he had not been properly briefed on the matter.

However, the body language of the people spoke volumes. They appeared to be living in palpable fear.

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For instance, an indigene of the community, Mr Charles (surname withheld) who was supposed to be our contact person chickened out when the reporter arrived Ishiagu. In fact, in Ishiagu, the fear of ritualists is the beginning of wisdom. Or so it seems.

And this is coming not long after suspected ritualists invaded the community and stole nine children. Mrs Nnenna Emmanuel Okonkwo, a mother of six, whose two children were stolen in one night told the reporter: "As I was sleeping, I was woken up at 4am when I heard the sound of my door being broken. I began to shout inside my room, 'who is that? Who is that? Who is that?' Then some men broke down the door and pointed their light at my face. They started dragging my eight-month old son with me and I called out to my mother-in-law in the next room, telling her that some people had broken into my room to take away my baby. As I was struggling with them, they gave me dirty slaps on either side of the cheek. The impact of the slaps as my eyes were covered with blood. As they were taking my child away, my husband's younger sister blocked them outside. So, they kicked her with their boots and she fell, hitting her waist on the ground.

"Then, they went to the other room where my mother-in-law and my daughter were sleeping and broke down the door as well. They entered the room and took away my daughter, aged three years and seven months who was sleeping with her grandmother. My mother in-law shouted that they can shoot her but leave her grand children, but they refused. They carried the two children into the vehicle they parked outside. Before our neighbours could come out, they had zoomed off. Since then, we have not set eyes on the children. My mother in-law said she could not live with what happened; that it was better for her to die. And she died two weeks later."

In a related development, a six-man gang which specialised in the sale of human parts for ritual purposes in Nkwerre, Imo State was recently smashed by the local vigilance group. It was gathered that when members of the gang were arrested, they confessed that they had been kidnapping their victims at various locations in the state. They also volunteered that they use the vital organs of their victims for rituals even as some were harvested and sold to people who needed them to transplant failed organs.

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them, they sold the parts between N500,000 and N1million, depending on what was in demand.

The gory act assumed a life of its own when the men took members of the local vigilance group and policemen to their abattoir in a forest in Umugara village, Nkwerre where the decomposing corpses of some of their victims, mostly women and children were found.

In Ibiaoegbe in Oru West LGA of Imo State, a 66 year-old woman identified as Mrs. Josephine Okorie was gruesomely murdered in her farm recently.

Few days after Mrs. Okorie, who was a church warden at St. Paul's Church, Ibiaoegbe was killed, the people of Umuakaje Umuseke, Okwudor community in Njaba LGA was thrown into mourning and confusion following the killing of one of their daughters, 28 year-old Mrs. Chikodi Nzerem. Her three-month old baby boy was also stolen by the cradle snatchers who cut off her head.

A source said: "Apparently, the ritualists wanted to go away with their victim's decapitated head but when they heard the voice of another woman, who was coming along the bush path, they escaped, abandoning both the head and the body. The woman raised the alarm and other farmers came but the evil people had escaped."

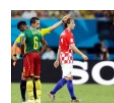
In the same vein, Mrs Chikodi Nzerem, a widow and nursing mother of a four month-old baby boy, was murdered in her father's house in Okwudor in Njaba LGA of Imo State. Her baby was also stolen.

Family sources alleged that the mother of three was sent to the great beyond by her boyfriend who had pestered her for marriage without success since her husband died about two years ago. "I believe she was killed because she refused to hand over the child to her boyfriend and no one knows what has become of the tot. Perhaps, it has been used for ritual," said Chikodi's sibling.

Indeed, investigation revealed that ritualists are on the prowl looking for people to devour. Hence the rate of ritual attacks and killings have increased considerably in recent times. It is the same story



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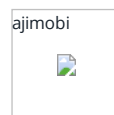
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everywhere, as no part of the country is being marginalised on this score.

On March 1, Mrs Zainab Mohammed was brutally raped at Kukshi village, Dass LGA of Bauchi by three men who also plucked her eyes with a knife for ritual.

The victim, a 30-year old mother of four who is physically challenged, said: "They held my neck and I almost died. They twisted my hands, they opened my two and took turns to rape me. I was fainting. Then they brought an object – I don't know whether it was a knife or not and they started removing my left eye. I screamed and tried to struggle but they removed my left eye. They started removing the other eye and I screamed louder."

It was learnt that the evil men took the woman's eye to a native doctor who allegedly offered them N1million.

In May, a 54-year old grandmother, Sukuratu Salami and three others including a cemetery guard were paraded at the Lagos State Police Command, Ikeja for trading in human parts such as skulls, bones, liver and intestines.

Salami, a mother of three children whose ages are 30, 27 and 23 years respectively, explained that she was tempted to go into the weird business by the irresistible offer from a voodoo practitioner. "A herbalist approached me last and asked for human parts. When he told how much they buy parts, I was tempted. I approached one Tantoloun, who works in a grave yard. He sold a skull for N10,000 and I sold it in turn for N20,000. Greed made me to continue until I was arrested. I bought pieces of bones N2,000, liver and intestines for N1,000 each and resell for N5,000 or more depending on the buyer's bargaining power."

It could, indeed, be said that ritualists are running riot in the South West.

In March, a man was caught in Ibadan, Oyo State with three human tongues. The incident occurred three days after the shocking discovery of the horror forest at Soka area of Ibadan where scores of skulls, human skeletons, mutilated and decomposing bodies were found.

In April, an eight-year old girl identified as Amarachi missed death by the whiskers as a mobile policeman, Gbuchenge Augustine with Force Number 400823 allegedly wanted to use her for rituals.

Amarachi was found under the policeman's bed in his one-room apartment at Olufowobi Street, Ikosi-Ketu, Lagos with her mouth gagged and her hands and legs tied.

Amarachi's father, Mr Patrick Abakwan, said that before his daughter was rescued, "the man had twisted her neck and used an object to break her skull thinking she would die in the process but God saved her."

Also in April, a storey-building that allegedly served as the operational base of ritualists was uncovered in Akinremi Estate in Adigbe area of Ogun State. Discovered at the den were suspected human blood in a calabash, a coffin, human effigy, a live scorpion and personal effects believed to belong to victims who might have been wasted.

The discovery came barely 24 hours after a similar scene was discovered in Egbado village in Ewekoro LGA of the state.

Horror of immense proportion played out in Ekwudinage Obegu village in Ebonyi State recently when a 30-year old man simply identified as Chukwudi allegedly killed and beheaded his 56-year old father, Michael. After severing the head of his father, Chukwudi drank his blood and ate up his neck.

Maintaining that Chukwudi's action might not be unconnected with ritual killing, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mr Chris Anyanwu disclosed: "He (Chukwudi) was arrested on April 1, 2014 and before he was arrested, he was running and waving his machete which he used to cut his father's head and threatened to kill anybody who moved close to him. Meanwhile he was overpowered and arrested but was caught eating the part of the severed head, after he ate-up the entire neck of the severed head.

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I think it is not unconnected with ritual killing because it does appear he may have been asked to do such a thing."

On June 10, a young boy hawking belts on Alhaji Jamiu Sulaimon Street in Itele, Ota area of Ogun State escaped death by the skin of his teeth as he was almost killed by suspected ritualists who lured him into a house on the pretext that they wanted to patronise him.

It was learnt that the boy was hawking with his friend when he was called into the compound. But when the boy did not come out after about 30 minutes, his friend raised the alarm. And when the police stormed the house, an attempt had been made to slaughter him, as there was a big gash on his neck. One of his eyes was oozing blood, perhaps an attempt was made to pluck it.

The Ogun State PPRO, Mr Muiyiwa Adejobi said: "Our men from the Itele Division moved in as soon as they got a report about the house suspected to be used by kidnappers and succeeded in rescuing the boy alive even though he was in bad shape."

Recently, a heap of over 20 human skulls, skeletons and decomposing bodies were uncovered at Kilometre 15 on the Aba/Azumini Highway, otherwise known as 'No man's land' after Akpaa village in Obingwa LGA of Abia State. There, victims are butchered and their vital organs removed. One of the victims was identified as 26-year old Onyekachi Chukwu, who hailed from Ahaba Imenyi in Isuikwuato LGA of Abia State.

A source attributed the upsurge of ritual killings to forthcoming election and the get-rich-quick syndrome. "As we approach the election year, many desperate politicians will go to any length in order to win election. They will engage the services of native doctors who may request for human body parts to do the medicine. And because the end justifies the means for them, they will engage thugs to kidnap and kill people whose body parts will be removed and forwarded to the native doctors who requested for them.

"Again, the get-rich-quick bug seems to have bitten more people nowadays. And such desperados are ready to do anything, including harvesting human organs for money rituals," the source said.

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