

government area with fresh and decomposing human parts littered all over, with vital parts of some bodies missing.

Report said the victims were taken to the forest and butchered by killers who then removed the vital parts needed for money-making rituals. Some prominent citizens of the state and environs were alleged to be patrons of herbalists and native doctors who perform rituals in the forest.

One of the mind boggling incidents was the discovery of another horror sight at the Okija shrine in Anambra state. The shrine achieved notoriety in 2004 when it was raided by the Anambra State Police Command, where 50 decomposing or shrunk bodies and 20 human skulls were found. The shrine was also reportedly patronised by politicians. Till date, politicians still visit Okija shrine.

It is tragic enough that some Nigerians still believe in gaining power and making money through this practice. But more worrisome and astonishing is the use of loved ones, such as one's parents, siblings and wives for this devilish purpose. One of such horrifying incidents occurred in Abia state, when a 26 year-old boy allegedly killed his mother for ritual. The suspect, Ebi Onu, who hailed from Igberere, Bende council area of the state, reportedly went to Nguzu Edda in Ebonyi State where he consulted a herbalist to make charms that would make him become rich. The herbalist was said to have asked Ebi to kill his mother and bring her private part which he said would be used to prepare concoction for him. He allegedly connived with three of his friends to lay ambush for his mother along a bush path and lured his mother into taking a walk with him along that route. On sighting them, his killer friends reportedly sprang out from their hiding and hacked Ebi's mother to death after which they cut off her private part.

Worried by her disappearance, a search party with Ebi reportedly combed the vicinity for her without luck. Report said some of the residents said they saw the missing woman with her son and consequently Ebi was subjected to questioning and tortured by some youths until he allegedly owned up and took the youths to where he buried his mother at the bank of a river. The angry youths were said to have beaten him to death, thereby depriving him of living to see his inordinate ambition of becoming rich through ritual means.

In the same vein, residents of Bale Ilado village in Morogbo area of Lagos State were thrown into panic recently after a member of the community identified as Segun Adisa allegedly beheaded his own father for money ritual.

However, in his confessional statement to the Police, the suspect claimed that he had to strike first to prevent his father whom he claimed earlier took him to a shrine where he claimed there was an attempt to kill him for money ritual.

Again in Aba, a landlord was alleged to have killed his two children for ritual purpose. The landlord (names withheld) as gathered, dashed out of his three-storey building on Omenazu road in Aba, on sighting some policemen approaching. Policemen from the Abia state command who acted on tip off, were said to have swooped on the building and according to residents of the area, two unconscious children identified as his children were found inside one of the rooms transfixed.

Not too long ago in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, the body of a lady was found in the boot of a Honda car with plate number AG 847 SUL belonging to an Abuja based businessman whose identity was given as Abdullai Ibrahim. The suspect was said to have been arrested by policemen on patrol while he was cleaning the blood stain on the back seat of the car. Preliminary investigation, according to police sources, revealed that the suspect slit the deceased's throat with a knife for alleged ritual purpose.

In Kaduna state, three youths were reported in 2007 to have lured a 17 year-old sugarcane hawker, Ibrahim Shehu, to

the outskirts of a village and strangled him. They were said to have been at the verge of removing his eyes when policemen that were alerted by a farmer swooped on them. The suspects, according to the Kaduna State Police Command, confessed to have wanted to pluck out the eyes for money ritual.

Same year in Ibafo area of Ogun state, a woman who managed to escape from a kidnappers den alerted policemen led by one Charles Ogenegbe, a Deputy Superintendent of Police, who stormed the hideout, where a shrine used as slaughter for human beings was discovered.

Also same year in Benue, a 77 year-old woman identified as Adiya Omachi was murdered in her farmland at Odaleko, along Ikachi Adum road. Not done, her assailants reportedly slashed her private parts, signifying they could be ritualists.

In Niger state, three persons were arrested by the police for allegedly beheading a 10-year-old boy in Amale Village, Kaffi-koro District, Paiko local government area of the state for ritual.

The deceased as gathered, was lured by one Salleh Ibrahim who took him on his motorcycle from Amale village to meet two of his other accomplices: Usman Sarki and Dantala Doma. During interrogation, Sarki told policemen that he was contracted by one Gajere to bring the boy's head for money ritual. The lad's headless body was reportedly found in Salleh's residence while the head was found buried in a shallow grave near Erena in Shiroro local government, pending when they would take it to the herbalist.

If the startling confession of 20 year-old Agu Nwanu, who disclosed that he had so far killed twenty children for money rituals, all in his bid to ensure he does not end up like his poor father must be taken seriously, then all hands must be on deck to address this rising incident of ritual killings. Security operatives appear to be doing their best to curb these evil and very primitive rituals. But their best appears not to be enough as the menace is on the increase going by daily reports of these killings.

Police react

When the Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, Ngozi Braide was contacted on the spate of ritual killings, she said about Lagos.

"I will disagree with you on the issue of ritual killing being on the increase in Lagos state. There has not been any of such since my assumption. Sometime last year and about two months ago, we paraded some suspects for being in possession of human parts. The arrests were effected by men of the Special Anti Robbery Squad and the suspects were arrested from other states.

"During interrogation, we discovered they had same modus operandi. They always go to the grave yard to exhume corpses. It's something they commit in connivance with the security men at the cemetery. And the buyers, comprising the native doctors and other persons will be there.

"Let me state here that the Police as security agents do not believe in mystics. We work with facts and physical evidence. So, when you say people indulge in rituals, we do not understand that language.

What we have also recorded are cases of persons suspected to be kidnappers who were attacked by the mob. It happened at Apapa, Iyana-Ipaja, Shahsha areas. In Shahsha, a man was sighted with a little child in his car and they accused him of wanting to use the child for money ritual and a mob attacked him, without giving him room to explain