

THE EFFECTS OF NYINYA MBATUGH (NIGHT HORSE) ON THE TIV SOCIETY

Andrew Philips Adeg, PhD
Department of Religion and Cultural Studies
Benue State University
Makurdi-Nigeria.

Abstract

The paper examined the Phenomenon of Nyinya Mbatugh (Night Horse) among the Tiv of Central Nigeria. The paper was motivated by a study tour embarked upon by Staff of African Religion and the third year students of the Department of Religion and Cultural Studies of the Benue State University, Makurdi to Katsina Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. The researcher was fascinated about the the phenomenon, the intrigues and activities surrounding Phenomenon of Nyinya Mbatugh (Night Horse) among the Tiv of Central Nigeria and decided to further study the phenomenon. The study is a qualitative research and adopts the descriptive and phenomenological methods. The paper employed the primary and secondary methods in the data collection procedure. In the primary source, oral interviews and personal observation were used. In the secondary source, information was obtained from text books and journal articles. The paper established that the witches among the Tiv have different avenues and or devices of carrying out tsav (witchcraft) practices. One of these devices is the use of Nyinya Mbatugh (Night Horse) in which a human being is transformed into a nocturnal horse and ridden by the witches. It also established that this act which is a core aspect of the practice of tsav among the Tiv destroys a victim and often leads to his/her death as several complications develop as a result of being ridden. The paper calls for a stop to this act perpetrated by witches against mba lun vanger gbirin (non-witches) as the treatment is inhumane. The paper calls on Tiv witches to transfer their nocturnal technologies into reality for use by the generality of the people. The paper finally notes that a society cannot develop in an atmosphere of fear and unwanton destruction of the lives of members who lack spiritual powers for their protection.

Introduction

Witchcraft is a universal phenomenon that is closely related to magic and sorcery. Both have the devilish intention of injuring their fellow men by occult means. A witch possesses a special psychic quality which permits his/her spirit to leave his/her body while he/she is asleep to afflict injuries on others or even to eat their souls (Ikenga Metuh 129). Witches transform into animal familiars like cats, owls, bats, dogs, hyenas and pigs and using mediums like night crafts, motorcycles, cars, bicycles to travel long distances in attending nocturnal meetings within and without their immediate communities (Adeg 62).

According to Ikenga Metuh, witchcraft consists of two powers ; the power of *u duen tsav*, metempsychosis- of leaving one's body and changing to other forms, and the destructive mystical power of injuring others or eating their souls (129). However, it is worthy to note that not everybody who has the power of metempsychosis is a witch. In other words, some may just posses the power of *u nengen tsav* ordinary metempsychosis that enables the person to 'see only' ; being aware of the activities of witches but being unable to leaving ones body to join them nocturnally (129). Such an individual could however obtain the powers of leaving his/her soul and changing into other forms from experienced witches.

Among the Tiv it is those witches with powers of metempsychosis, the powers of leaving their bodies at night and transforming into animal familiars to cause destructive injuries or eat the souls of their victims that engage in the phenomenon of *Nyinya mbatugh* (night horse) where they transform innocent victims in their sleep into nocturnal horses which they ride on at night to attend meetings or engage in sports and competition.

Originally, Tiv witches rode on these human horses at night which accounts for the name *Nyinya mbatugh* (night horse); however, due to mischief and show of power and supremacy over non witches, individuals in contemporary Tiv society through various mystic means ride on their fellow humans in broad day light, but only fellow witches or those with a third eye are able to see them perpetrate this evil. Thus, a witch travelling a long distance may decide to transform his/herself into a fly and perch on the back of an innocent traveller to complete the journey instead of trekking.

The Tiv *mnenge u tar* (worldview) it must be emphasised is dualistic, thus events that take place in the day time are replicated in the spiritual world. As such just as cars, bicycles, motorcycles and boats are ridden in the physical world they are similarly ridden in the metaphysical world. This explains why a man may buy a car or any vehicle and rides same in the day while the witches in their mischief ride on the vehicle metaphysically causing irreparable damage to it. This makes the victim to go into debts in trying to 'fix' the problem. It is in the light of this that Tiv witches similar transform their victims into horses in order to ride on them causing the victims psychological, spiritual, economic, health and associated drawbacks.

The paper examines the phenomenon of *Nyinya mbatugh* (night horse) among the Tiv of central Nigeria. Fundamental questions like, why do witches transform fellow humans and ride on them? What do the witches benefit from the art? Is there any benefit for the victim? What are the effects on the victim? How can the art be tamed? and other related issues have preoccupied the attention of this paper.

Conceptual Clarification

The following words which appear in this paper refer to as :

Nyinya (Horse- *Equus caballus*) : *Nyinya* refers to a horse among the Tiv. It is a large hooved animal often used throughout history for riding and draft work. Included in the *Equus caballus* or horse family is the Zebra and the Ass, Mare, Colt, Filly, Foal, Stallion, Nag etc. It is a natural horse, beast of burden created by Aondo (the Supreme Being) to assist man in his daily chores such as moving heavy loads/luggages, transportation etc. Abel Joseph Ashe opined that the use of *nyinya* (horse) by the Tiv as a form of transportation has been in existence for as long as when the Tiv interacted with the Hausa from whom they bought horses from. He maintained that the Tiv use *nyinya* as a sign of *shagba* (royalty/prestige). The ability of an individual to buy a horse in the traditional Tiv society showed that the person was a great man. Thus, once he bought the horse, he rode and showed it to his friends, relations and the *kwav* (age grade). These in turn fed the horse, danced and sang his praises for achieving such an uncommon feat and sprayed him with money in the process (Oral interview).

Nyinya mbatugh : This refers to a night horse ridden by witches among the Tiv. In other words *Nyinya mbatugh* is a humanbeing who is transformed into a horse by the witches and ridden by them often for fun, competitions and a means of transportation to attend nocturnal meetings. Commenting on the concept *Nyinya mbatugh*, East affirmed the fact that among the Tiv everything that is owned by men the *mbatsav* (witches) have their equivalent. According to him, The *mbatsav* have *Nyinya* (horse) which they ride at night. He explained that the horse is cast out of copper; It is quite small, but in the night-time they enlarge it by means of *tsav* (witchcraft) into a great steed on which they mount. Sometimes the witch seizes his brother who is *vanger gbirin* (not a witch), changes him into a Stallion and rides him (48).

East's assertion of the casting of the *Nyinya mbatugh* into a concrete form is corroborated by Akundushima Samuel who posited that the *Nyinya mbatugh* is symbolised by a carved wood in the form of a horse used for nocturnal and paranormal activities by those initiated into the cult (Oral interview). In the view of Downes the *Nyinya mbatugh* is a magical night horse on which the *mbatsav* rode through the air (10). Downes described the *Nyinya mbatugh* or night horse as a little imitation horse or just a little bridle attached to a ring on which the external soul could ride when pursuing *tsav*. He posited that the possession and use of these magical emblems by Tiv witches was their outward signs of their means of entry into the invisible side of nature (31).

Evidence also show that witches among other ethnic nationalities in African have the knowledge of transforming humans into horses and riding on them nocturnally. Downes reports that the Jukuns of Taraba State also have similar phenomenon of the *Nyinya mbatugh* in the *dokin dare* (night horse). In his second attempt at the issue Downes described the *Nyinya mbatugh* as a magical horse, usually constructed of iron, on which *mbatsav* (witches) can ride at night when engaged on magical work. He maintained that the Tiv seem to belief explicitly in the power of the *mbatsav* to leave their bodies at night, in order to carry on their work of magic (The Tiv Tribe, 43).

Mama Dorcas Aleva averrs that the *Nyinya mbatugh* can be purchased and used as a private mystical mode of mobility by the witches (Oral interview). On his part, Utikili Maurice opines that when Aondo (the Supreme Being) created the world and all the animals, *Nyinya* was also created. It is in the light of the above that the *mbatsav* (witches) in Tiv society have also learnt the art of turning the uninitiated in the art of *tsav* (witchcraft) into horses they ride at night. To be able to partake in *nyinya i hindan* activities, a person must first be initiated. Such a person first identifies someone who knows the art to initiate him/her in the cult. After been initiated, the initiate is taught how to carry out this cult activities.

According to Anyi Udor, the materials involved in the initiation include : *iji kyegh* (an egg), *Ikyuur i hinga* (the nail of a squirrel), *gambe u or kpen* (the bed on which the dead lay), *iyuwe or* (human flesh), the coat of a chicken's leg, blood from a chicken. The materials are mixed together and fried in *ichenge* (piece of earthenware pot). Thereafter the items are ground into powder to be used for incissions during the initiation ; following which the initiate can now ride a *nyinya mbatugh*. The remaining part of the medicine is used for the protection of the initiate from coming to harm (Oral interview). From the foregone, it is clear that not every witch can ride the *nyinya mbatugh* ; but only those who are initiated in the art by inheritance or through purchase.

Tindiir Mbakpenen explained that the phenomenon of *nyinya mbatugh* defies scientific explanations or reason hence it involves the use of mysterious/supernatural forces. According to him males and females are involved in the *nyinya mbatugh* cult activities (Oral interview). This is explained better by Mama Iniuun who remarked that both men and women can ride on *nyinya mbatugh* as witches and or be transformed and ridden on as *nyinya mbatugh* by the witches (Oral interview), the scenario smacks off the issue of gender disparity in the act of *nyinya mbatugh*. It should be noted that the witches can equally ride someone even in broadday light and not necessarily at night (Gbatse Udoji, Oral interview). Despite the information above, Abum Cheen is quick to dispel the fact that the art of *nyinya mbatugh* is a witchcraft activity. According to him, it is a magical art of *dufu* (invisible charm). He is quick to point out that anybody with this knowledge can turn a victim into a horse and ride the person irrespective of his/her social status in the society (Oral interview).

Types of Nyinya

Elder Francis Ahar Kwende classifies *Nyinya mbatugh* into two main broad categories (A) *Nyinya* of physical contact and (B) *Nyinya* of non physical contact. He stated that in the *Nyinya* of physical contact the soul or spiritual essence of the victim is taken out and ridden as a horse at night; while the lifeless body remains on the bed awaiting the return of the soul and never wakes up throughout the period of the absence of the soul.

In the *Nyinya* of non physical contact, the witches go for the property of the victim such as his/her piece of clothing, shoes, nails, cups, pots, hair etc (Oral interview). This category of *Nyinya* acts on the principle of "like beget like" or Homoeopathic magic. In this case the property of the victim is gotten hold of and incantations made and the spell cast to turn the victim into a horse to be ridden by the witches (Adega 8). It is thus from these two broad categories that all the other forms of *Nyinya mbatugh* find placement. These include: (1) *Nyinya Gyundu* (Shoulder type), (2) *Nyinya yough* (House type), (3) *Nyinya Ngoloji/ngoo ji* (House fly type), (4) *Nyinya maandakaka/maanama* (Dragon fly), (5) *Nyinya u Abelewula* (Drizzle type), (6) *Nyinya i agugu* (Motor cycle type), (7) *Nyinya Kperetange/kpereketange* (Spider), (8) *Nyinya Luam* (Food type). Other types include: (9) *Nyinya tsar/ichaver ikyondu* (Rag type), (10) *Nyinya kulugh* (Tortoise type), (11) *Nyinya veendeve* (Gecko type), (12) *Nyinya Azendem/adendem* (Hedgehog type), (13) *Nyinya Kyuen*, (14) *Nyinya paver* (Grasshopper type), (15) *Nyinya Gbargbar* (Sparrow type), (16) *Nyinya Melabu*, (17) *Nyinya Leda*, (Solomon Torkebi, Oral interview). Samuel Akundushima mentions (18) *Nyinya Bagu* (Monkey type), (19) *Nyinya Gelege* (Playing mantis type) (Oral interview). The forms of *Nyinya i Mbatugh* are discussed below under the two broad categories viz:

(A) *Nyinya* of physical contact

(1) ***Nyinya Gyundu (Shoulder type)***: Terngu Ukpuu (Alias Dugbe Tenyi) and Uke Terfa (Alias Ukoko-JP) both contend that *nyinya Gyundu* is one of the main types of *Nyinya* in the Tiv nocturnal world. It has affinity with *nyinya yough*. This is because the victim would usually be sleeping in the house when he or she is taken out to be ridden upon as a horse by the witch. The rider would call the victim's name and make him or her to come out backing the rider so as not to identify the witch. The rider would touch the victim with *ikoov ki wua* (the stalk and ear of guinea corn) and make the victim to bend down to be ridden upon (Oral interview).

The touching of the *Nyinya* (victim) with *ikoov ki wua* is to determine if s/he has some form of protection against *nyinya*. When the witch is satisfied that s/he can ride on the victim without problem, the *ikoov ki wua* is placed at the victim's waist and made to look like a tail. The *ikonough* (saddle) is also fixed at the victim's back on which the rider sits or stands as the case may be. One could be ridden with or without the saddle. When the victim has the *ikonough* permanently fixed to his/her waist by the witches, he or she could be ridden by anyone who has the arcane knowledge and is in the art of turning humanbeings as *Nyinya* at night and riding them (Oral interview).

(2) ***Nyinya yough (House type)***: This type of *Nyinya* is similar to *nyinya Gyundu* as postulated above. Here, the victim must be sleeping in the house. If one is not asleep, it is not possible to invite him or her out so as to be ridden upon (Terngu Ukpuu, Oral interview).

(3) ***Nyinya Ngoloji (House fly type)***: *Ngoloji* also spelt *ngoo ji*; this type has similarities with *Nyinya maandakaka/maanama* and *paver* types. Akodi Terver reveals that the victim is ridden in this type of *Nyinya* while walking on the road or ridding on a motor cycle. The witch would transform into a house fly and perch on the victim's back and would climb down whenever and wherever he or she is done. When the victim goes to sleep, he/she feels body pains but least expects it to be as a result of being ridden upon. A person with the knowledge of the art of riding the *Nyinya Ngoloji* would understand as soon as he sees the victim with a fly perched on his/her back or shoulders. Akodi Terver also maintained that when the victim approaches or enters into a village, the *Ngoloji* (fly) perched on his back would climb down in order to avoid being noticed (Oral interview).

(4) ***Nyinya Paver (Grasshopper type)***: In this type of *Nyinya*, while travelling on the road, the victim would feel unusually weighty. He/she might be walking on the road with another person who may transform into *Paver* and ride on the victim's back. The rider would always choose to be behind the victim and whenever the victim turns, the rider would climb down (Tyodugh Aondoakaa, Oral interview).

(5) ***Nyinya i Abelewula (Drizzle type)***: Uke Terfa postulates that at any time and whenever it is drizzling be it in the day or at night; while the victim is walking on the road and is touched by the drizzles, the witch uses the opportunity presented by the rain to ride on the victim. It is however not clearly stated the connection between the rider, the victim and the drizzles (*abelewula*). This has also underscored the mystery surrounding the phenomenon of *Nyinya i mbatugh* (witches horse) among the Tiv (Oral interview).

(6) ***Nyinya Agugu (Motor cycle type)***: Iorwua Felix Gbawuan contends that, in this type of *Nyinya*, while the victim is sleeping, he/she is made to come out. On coming out, the rider sits on him/her, holds and twists the victim's ears and kick starts like a motorcycle and the process of riding commences. The victim's anus is made to serve as the break light while the eyes serve as the headlight respectively. Iorwua Felix Gbawuan further stated that this type of *Nyinya* is very dangerous and can easily kill the victim. This, he maintains, is so because, the victim's blood serves as the fuel that powers the bike or motor cycle (Oral interview).

(7) ***Nyinya Kperetetange/kpereketange (Spider type)***: In this type of *Nyinya*, the victim would be sleeping or sitting and would notice a spider climb on him/her. This is the manifestation of being ridden upon (Tyavger Audu, Oral interview).

(8) ***Nyinya Luam (Food type)***: Iorshe Donald posits that a witch can only operate this type of *Nyinya* while the victim is eating food. The rider gets on the back of the victim and climbs down as soon as the victim stops eating (Oral interview).

(B) Nyinya of non physical contact

(9) Nyinya Chaukyondu/chaver ikyondu (Rag type): This is another type of *Nyinya*. Terngu Ukpou opined that the person in the business of riding others as horses would get a piece of cloth belonging to his/her victim. He would at anytime *ta chia* (make incantations) to justify his/her action and thereafter call the victim's name and sit on the piece of cloth. Whenever he/she does this, he/she is riding on the victim and the victim usually sleeps and wakes up the following day to feel uncomfortable with series of complaints regarding his/her health with respect to chest pains, stomach ache, etc (Oral interview). Godwin Genda corroborates the above position and submits that, in this type of *Nyinya*, the victim could be ridden without necessarily having direct contact with the rider (Oral interview).

(10) Nyinya kulugh (Tortoise type): In his explanation of this type of *Nyinya*, Thaddeus Mtsekou holds that the rider (witch) would get the victim's cloth, footwear or anything that belongs to him/her and cast some spells on it using *mou u Tiv* (native wool) which is then placed on the victim's property. At night, the rider would be pulling the cloth or any of such items belonging to the victim on the ground and in the process the victim feels heavy and experience pain all over his/her body. This is the result of being ridden upon through the *kulugh* form of *Nyinya* (Oral interview).

(11) Nyinya Veendeve (Gecko type): This type of *Nyinya* is closely related to the *kulugh* and *kperetetange* types respectively. Iorwua Felix Gbawuan asserts that, the rider is usually the one that hates the victim so much uses his/her knowledge of *Nyinya* to demonstrate his/her hatred and wickedness to the victim. He/she would get an item that belongs to the victim; place it on the ground, *tachia* (make incantations) to justify his/her action and cause the *Veendeve* (Gecko) to be walking on it. Through this process, the victim experiences all the symptoms of a person being ridden upon (Oral interview).

It is to be noted that the issue of *chia* is a very sensitive matter in Tiv religious culture. This is because for any person to cause anything to happen to another person; s/he must have sufficient *chia* to justify the act. Failure to do this translates to the fact that the perpetrator has no basis to cause harm to the intended targeted person. Most often when *chia* is lacking but such an individual proceeds with the action, s/he not only witnesses a failure in the plan; but is similarly and in most cases severely affected by whatever s/he had intended for the targeted person.

(12) Nyinya Azendem/Adendem (Hedgehog type): On the *Azendem/adendem* type of *Nyinya*, Tyogyer Mbaka avers that, while the victim is sleeping in the house, the rider would get to the victim's door step at night with *kwen* (gong) or *gbenger ikyar* (blade of a big hoe). As soon as he begins to beat the *kwen* or *gbenger ikyar*, the victim would come out like *Azendem/adendem* and begin to dance around (Oral interview). Here again, the process is bizarre since the connection between the *kwen* or *gbenger ikyar* and the victim cannot be explicitly explained through conventional methods of analysis. This has also given credence to the mysterious nature of the art or the phenomenon of *nyinya i mbatugh*.

(13) Nyinya Kyuen (Stone type): Shimayina Abwar opined that the rider would collect the victim's cloth and secretly place it on the ground and make some incantations. Thereafter, s/he would begin to hit the cloth with the *kyuen* (stone) and as a result the victim would feel the pains (Oral interview). The continuous ridding of an individual often degenerates into health challenges and psycho-spiritual problems requiring the attention of medicine men and women to arrest the situation and save the victim from total destruction by the *mbatsav* (witches).

The Reality of Nyinya Mbatugh (Night Horse) among the Tiv

In Tiv tradition there is the belief about the phenomenon of horse riding. This is not the riding of a real horse known to people generally. The phenomenon rather depicts the idea of transforming a human being into a horse using witchcraft potentialities and riding on the victim's back mainly at night. Shading light on this phenomenon, Iorumbur Ajiva suggested that while the spiritual or essence of the victim is taken out to be ridden by the witch, the physical body remains motionless on the bed awaiting the return of the soul. He averred that the Tiv use certain improvised symbols and objects which magically change into things they are intended for (Oral interview).

Nyinya mbatugh is not an approved and a generally acceptable practice hence, it is carried out mainly at night. The *Nyinya mbatugh* reportedly travels faster than a natural horse. It is also believed that, a non witch cannot detect when an individual is being ridden as a horse. This means that the phenomenon can only be detected by an individual with the knowledge of the art such as a person who has protective medicine against the art, or medicine men/women who are in the practice of treating people who are victims of the art. People that have previously been ridden and have obtained the remedy can as well detect when one is being ridden.

In the quest to obtain information for the paper, oral interview sessions were held with some elders and medicine men with requisite knowledge on the subject matter. However, some of the respondents claimed they were not involved in the practice personally nor were they victims of the art; but got to know of it through their relatives and friends who had suffered or were affected by the phenomenon of *Nyinya mbatugh*. The claim of innocence by some of the interviewees is not a strange occurrence in discussions involving the practice of witchcraft which is an esoteric subject matter among the Tiv. In this respect even those suspected of being practitioners conscientiously and vehemently denied any knowledge due probably to the stigma attached to witches. Opinion varies on the idea of bringing a victim out to be ridden.

Lagu Stephen opined that, a person who has the mysterious power of turning others into a horse would go to the victim's door, usually at night when the victim is asleep. He or she would use coal to draw a line on the door and then call the victim by his/her name. The victim at this juncture would get up from his/her bed and walk out. It is then that the person slaps the victim who immediately transforms into a horse. The victim would have *ikyonugh* (saddle/chair) placed at his/her waist on which the rider would sit and the process of riding the victim commences (Oral interview).

Timothy Anumah says that, the rider would use magical powers to invite the victim after moving round the compound/house in which the victim had slept. He disagrees with the position that the person is turned or transformed into a physical horse (Oral interview). This implies that only the soul or spiritual essence of the victim is summoned and ridden as *Nyinya mbatugh*. Iorwua Felix Gbawuan however claims that the victim is made to look like a horse. He asserts that the rider would use *ikyor ki wua* (the stalk and ear of guinea corn) as one of the items used in calling out the victim. When the victim comes out, the *ikyor ki wua* is placed at his back close to the anus and is made to look like the tail of the horse (Oral interview).

Godwin Genda equally disagrees with the argument that the victim is transformed into a physical horse. In his description of the process, he avers that the victim is made to bend slightly crossing his/her hands behind. The victim's hands joined from behind forms a platform at the waist on which the rider stands with his hands tightly held on the victim's shoulders and the process of riding is kick started. In this process, Genda contends that, the rider and the ridden could be recognised by others with similar mystical powers; an opinion also held by Timothy Anumah.

Those who subscribed to the opinion that the victim is made to look like a horse added that *lijam* which a replica of a bridle is used to tie the victim's mouth in addition to the saddle fastened at the waist of the victim. The *lijam* becomes the point through which the rider controls the horse just like the physical horse that is ridden in a normal circumstance. They also assert that the constant use of the *lijam* grimaces the victim's mouth to permanently twisted position until the victim is freed from being ridden by the witches. While still carrying the toga of a horse with both the saddle in the waist and bridle in the jaws, wherever the victim goes, (that is even when he/she travels outside his/her community), a person with the knowledge of horse ridding at the place of visit who sees him/her recognises and necessarily rides the victim at night, thus compounding his/her travails. The *ikyonugh* and *lijam* thus serve as nocturnal marks on the victim to be identified as such wherever he/she goes

Symptoms that Indicate that one is Being Ridden as *Nyinya*

It is worthy to note that it is often difficult to identify an individual who is being ridden by the witches as *Nyinya*; not even the victim knows this. However, certain signs, and behaviours of the victim give clear indications that he/she is being ridden as a horse by the witches. These signs include: General body pain/weakness, stomach ache, waist pain, inability to work on the farm, reddish mouth, bad mouth odour (as a result of constant consumption of human faeces, leaves, grasses etc), twisted mouth (due to the control mechanism of *lijam*) etc.

Other signs include: the victim feeling heavy on waking up as if s/he has over eaten, inability to trek long distances, chewing/biting of lips, the victim notices food particles not eaten the previous night when he/she brushes; (Agande Iorver, Oral interview). When these symptoms begin to manifest, consultation is made to the *orishor* (diviner) and the cause is identified. At times, an individual with a 'third eye' calls the attention of the victim to his/her predicaments and in other instances it is someone that specializes in the treatment who identifies the victim on seeing him/her and then offers to help (Mwuese Pila, Oral interview).

Food for the Nyinya

Given that turning people into horses and riding them by the witches is basically informed by wickedness, evil desire, vain pride, the desire to enslave and make the victim look foolish, stupid and even cause his/her death, *Nyinya* (the victim) in the course of its journey with the witch to attend nocturnal meetings, racing competitions, fun or leisure ride, each witch ties his/her *Nyinya* (horse) on *tih u ihor* (refuse dump) where it feeds on all manner of unpalatable and unconventional foods including: Human faeces (especially dried one), grasses such as *akangeraka* (*Eleusine indica*) and *ikya ijundu* (*Lagenaria siceraria* leaves), *akor a wua* (Guinea corn chaffs), food remnants that are usually thrown away, *ikyon* (spirogyra) as well as sand and mud or anything the rider decides that the victim should eat (Solomon Torkebi, Oral interview). The above scenario clearly points to the fact of man's inhumanity to fellow human beings which must be discouraged by all lovers of humanity. This manner of treating a fellow human being just to show superiority is uncalled for.

Effect of Riding on the Victim

The effect of being ridden as *Nyinya* by the witches has psychological, economic and very demoralizing consequences for the victim. For instance, the victim always feels waist and general body pains, he/she constantly falls sick and is no longer strong and cannot be effectively engaged in farming. For the Tiv as subsistent farmers there can be no calamity greater than this as the condition deprives the victim of food and income, thus ushering in poverty. Not only that, the victim suffers bad luck and bad mouth odour as a result of constantly eating human waste and other unpalatable foods. The victim also suffers from catarrh and cough as a result of the constant inhalation of dust (Nyajo Tyokighir, Oral interview).

The victim has a device called *lijam* (bridle) fixed to his or her jaws that enables the rider to control the horse and spur it into a gallop, slow down or to stop at any given time. As a result, the victim experiences pain at the jaws which is often twisted and disfigured unless a cure is effected. If not discovered and the cure effected, the victim may be crippled and even die (Atsue Iorwase, Fanyam Wende, Oral interview).

Psychologically, the victim is made to look stupid, foolish, low, and maladjusted as he/she is maltreated and made to suffer unduly. He/She becomes a beast of burden and a slave to the rider. Akodi Terver noted that it is only when the victim finds out that he/she is being maltreated through the art of *Nyinya* that he/she seeks for remedy. When the victim has obtained protection; he/she pretends when next the rider comes as usual to take the horse out again, he/she allows the rider to sit on his/her back. In the process, but run out of the control of the rider and crash; smashing the rider to the ground, causing severe injury that often leads to his or her death. This scenario is what Nyietagher Shamange refers to as suicide horse ride which claims the life of the witch/rider. This is because after the crash, the rider never recovers no matter the treatment s/he may receive (Oral interview).

It is believed that some witches have died on account of their salvaged horses which they had ridden upon for long going out of control and crashing them. Sometimes a victim who is now protected after suffering for a long time, comes out but no longer as a horse and expose the rider or witch dealing with him or her in another way that would make life miserable for the rider for the rest of his or her life (Torkebi Solomon, Oral interview).

Effects on the Ridder

It is fundamental to note that riding on one as horse at night or anytime does not attract any benefit to the the victim other than being destroyed physically, psychologically and spiritually. If any goodness or benefit there is for this practice, it is only for the rider/witch alone. The few benefits of riding the human horse include:

The witch/horse rider feels proud that he/she lords it over others as they are his/her means of transportation during nocturnal journeys. Also, the witch is accorded respect by his/her *kwav* (age grade) as he rides on the victim and his/her friends and partners in the art of riding human horses would give him/her gifts in the form of money, chickens and anything the individual is able to give.

In some communities, it is a rule that whenever an individual who is a member in the association of riding human horses fails to go out on a particular day, the partners who are out that day would visit the member and he/she would necessarily offer gifts to them.

Not only that the riders/witches do showcase their horses in order to find out the witch with the most respected horse among them. They also engage in competition and the winner is equally rewarded with physical gifts as well as praises. To have a *Nyinya i mbatugh* is a form of *shagba* or nocturnal prestige for the owner. Prizes are won by witches with the most dignified and fastest horses. This explains why witches often use school fields, church sites and any open space for their nocturnal meetings and riding exercises where they sing songs and dance (Torkebi Solomon, Oral interview).

Remedying the Phenomenon of Nyinya mbatugh

When the symptoms manifest, consultation is made to the *orishor* (diviner) following which the victim visits a medicine man with requisite knowledge for treating the phenomenon of *Nyinya*. While there is no specific way of treatment as each medicineman/woman has his/her recipe, remedying the problem can generally be affected through the following ways:

(i) *Iyol i wasen/Iyol i yangen* (Incisions): Incisions are made on the body of the victim especially at the joints, chest, forehead and waist and powdered medicine rubbed in the incisions. According to Nyietagher Shamange the ritual cleansing of the victim in *Iyol i wasen/Iyol i yangen* is meant to protect the victim from being ridden as a horse by the witches again. The incisions are significant and symbolic because; Those made on the forehead for instance prevent the witch from recognising the “horse” (victim) again. Those on the chest prevent the witch from calling out and controlling the spiritual essence or soul of the victim; while those made on the waist make it difficult and uncomfortable for the witch to ride the victim again (Oral interview).

In preparing medicine for incisions, Tindiir Mbakpenev uses the following: *Gbaaye u aondo a gbe shami yo* (*Prospis africana*) struck by thunder, *Gbagbongom* roots (*Burkea africana*), *Ikyehgeh* (*Aframomum melegueta*), piece of *tugudu* (native cloth), blood from a chicken and the coat from the feet of a chicken. These are fried in a piece of earthenware pot and ground into powder to be administered on the incisions (Oral interview). While undergoing treatment by incision the victim also rubs *ate/akweshi* (palm kernel oil) to soften the waist. The incisions take six days to complete.

(ii) *Ya u yangen* (protecting the compound): To protect the members of an entire household from falling victim of the phenomenon of *Nyinya i mabatugh* the *or ya* (family head) could *yange ya* (protect his compound) by the use of strong medicine to ward off the witches. The procedure for *ya u yangen* involves the use of *igbe* (anti witches peg) which is made from *gbaaye* (*Prosopis africana*) tree and *ihira* (spear grass/*Imperata cylindrica*). Utikili Maurice explained that the *igbe* is fixed to the ground in a location in the compound while the *ihira* which is knotted at both ends and fortified protective medicine traps any witch coming into a compound with the intent of riding on a human horse (Oral interview).

The peg and the spear grass glues the feet of the witch to the spot and he/she is unable to move. The witch can only be freed if the compound head unties him nocturnally by getting dried or fresh spear grass, tying two knots at both ends, moving to the location of the *igbe*, holding it with the left hand and using the spear grass to dip it in water in a clay plate and sprinkling it on the witch’s chest and feet to set him free. The freed witch quickly runs to his/her place to hide out of shame (Oral interview).

While this nocturnal confrontation goes on without the notice of non-witches, the compound head could make the issue a physical matter by allowing non-witches to witness the matter by seeing the witch pegged to the *igbe* in broad day light. Most often, witches seen in this state die a few days after their release. Utikili Maurice also stated that the witch on a riding mission is often clad in *ibyor* a pant like under garment covering only the genitalia (Oral Interview).

(iii) Removing the *Ikyonugh* (saddle) and *Lijam* (bridle) from a victim

The removal of the *Ikyonugh* (saddle) and *Lijam* (bridle) from the waist and jaws of the victim precedes the incisions. Adinya Udewua explained that the *Ikyonugh ki Nyinya* is made with a splinter of *gbaaye* (*Prosopis africana*) that has germinated on a grave. The splinter of *gbaaye* is wound round with *mou* (wool). Another composition of the *Ikyonugh ki Nyinya* is *ikor ki wua* (the stalk and ear of guinea corn). These items are tied together using *mou* and sorcery added to it to make it efficacious. The *Ikyonugh ki Nyinya* is placed on the waist of the victim and it is on this that the witch sits as he/she rides on the victim (Oral interview).



Figure 1: Adinya Udewua sucks the *Ikyonugh* from the waist of a victim after incisions.



Figure 2: *Ikyonugh ki Nyinya*



Figure 3: *Ikyonugh ki Nyinya* sucked out

On the other hand, the *Lijam i Nyinya* (bridle) is made purely of *mou* (native wool) that is spun into a single line in a circular form. It is mystically placed in the lower jaws of the victim by the witches. The line of wool has knots on it. Each knot signifies the number of years that the victim was ridden as a horse (Adinya Udewua, Oral interview). The *Lijam* is used in regulating the horse whenever it is ridden by the witch.

Adinya Udewua uses two methods in removing the *Ikyonugh ki Nyinya*. The first approach involves those who are not HIV positive. In this procedure, he makes some incisions around the waist where the saddle is located, makes incantations and draws or sucks it out with his mouth; while in the second method involving HIV positive victims he makes incisions around the location and makes incantations for the saddle to come out on its own. According to him, the spirits reveal to him if a victim is HIV positive or not and that he is never affected by the victim's condition (Oral interview).

For the *Lijam* or bridle, the victim is asked to go behind the compound and pluck any shrub or leaves of his/her choice. When this is brought, he/she is asked to chew same and spit on the ground. When the victim spits out the grass, shrubs or leaves he/she had chewed, the *Lijam* is found in the chewed grass. Most often, the grass, shrub or leaves an individual plucks for this purpose is his/her favourite when turned into a horse by the witches (Adinya Udewua, Oral interview).



Figure 4: *Lijam* (bridle)



Figure 5: *Lijam* and *Ikyonugh* (bridle/saddle)

(2) *Ichigh ki wan* (Preparation of herbs): In this method of healing a victim of *nyinya* the medicine man collects several roots, herbs and shrubs which are prepared for the victim to take orally. The essence of taking the herbs is to enable the victim to purge the waste substances s/he had eaten while being ridden by his tormentor. Agande Iorver uses the following herbs which are arranged in an earthenware pot, boiled and taken orally by the victim twice daily for six days. These include: the roots of *asar u pupur* (Sickle bush/*Dichrostachys cinerea*), roots of *yaghlegum* (*Fluggea virosa*), roots of *jiagba* (*Pericopsis laxiflora*), roots of *gbagbongom* (*Burkea africana*). The patient pays ₦1000 and 1penny (Oral interview).

In some methods of remedy *wuhe kuran* (cleansing or purification rite) is performed by the medicine man before the aforementioned cure is affected. When this rite is performed, the victim is fortified or given a body protector against *Nyinya* in form of a finger ring. In this case, when the horse rider makes further attempts, the victim would wake up, get hold of and expose the rider or make him pay for his devilish acts. The fee in the two methods of treatment is determined by the medicine man.

It is also worth noting that, for prevention against being a victim of *Nyinya chaukyondo/chaver ikyondo*, *Nyinya kulugh* (tortoise) and *Nyinya veendeve* (Gecko) respectively one is required to always destroy or burn one's old /unused pieces of clothing to prevent them from falling into wrong hands. These forms of *Nyinya i mbatugh* strive on making use of ones personal effects to operate.

Conclusion

Riding humans as horses nocturnally does no one any good; not even the rider. It is the inhumane treatment of non-witches by the witches. That such individuals are *vanger gbilin* (not witches) and by implication can not defend themselves nocturnally does not mean they be made slaves by the *mbatsav* (witches) in their communities. To say the least, the art should be discouraged. If the universal creed of love means anything to the witches then they must refrain from this heinous crime of turning fellow humans into beasts of burden and riding and mistreating them. Indeed, the witches must not do to others that which they would not like done to them. Thus, if they love themselves they must extend this same love of self to other members of the society who are not witches.

Similarly, seeing that just a few nocturnal benefits accrue to the witch from his or her cohorts; but often ending disastrously in death for the rider and the victim the art should be discouraged. Most often having being initiated into the art it becomes difficult for the initiate of *Nyinya* to abandon the practice. This creates a situation where in the absence of a victim to ride the witch resorts to riding on very close relations like the wife, husband or child even though he/she is not ignorant of the fact that the practice does not do any good to the victim (s).

It is worthy to note that some Tiv have however dismissed the reality of the art of *Nyinnya i mbatugh* often claiming that it is fictitious and only a figment of the Tiv people's imagination. Whatever may be the position of the Tiv and non Tiv on the matter, there is need to totally discourage the act. This is because a human being deserves to be treated with respect and dignity as a humanbeing whether or not the person is a witch.

Finally, Tiv witches must as a matter of necessity learn to transfer their nocturnal technologies into physical technologies to benefit the generality of society for the effective development of Tivland, Nigeria, Africa and the world at large. The world is enjoying technological breakthroughs because the western world has transferred its technological know-how into open knowledge. Tiv nocturnal technologies must not remain close and esoteric to a privileged few who mis-use it to lord it over their kith and kin who are not witches. This is the only thing that can usher in development and technological breakthrough for the Tiv and Africa generally.

Acknowledgments

My special appreciation goes to Prof. Sarwuan Daniel Shishima who assisted me in editing this manuscript and giving it the desired shape. I must also appreciate the efforts of Thomas Tivkaa Kercha, Abe I. Joseph, Jeffrey Tortya Ushahemba, Henry Terpase Aleva, Akundushima Samuel and Solomon Torkebi who assisted in the course of field trips in the various parts of Benue State.

Works Cited

- Andrew Philips Adeg. *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of African Religion*. Makurdi: Obeta Printing and Publishing Co, 2010. Print.
- Downes R.M. *Tiv Religion*. Ibadan: University Press, 1971. Print.
- _____. *Th Tiv Tribe*. Kaduna: Government Printer, 1933. Print.
- East, R.N. (Trans). *Akiga's Sory: The Tiv Tribe as seen by one of its Members*. London: Oxford University Press, 1965. Print.
- Emefie Ikenga Metuh. *God and Man in African Religion* (2nd ed). Enugu: Snaap Press, 1999. Print.

List of Informed Respondents

S/n	Name(s)	Sex	Age	Occupation	Place of Interview	Date
1.	Abel Joseph Ashe	M	86yrs	Medicine Man	Gyaluwa, Onov-Aondo, Gwer West LGA, Benue State	4/03/2015
2.	Abum Cheen	M	50yrs	Medicine Man	Gyaluwa, Onov-Aondo, Gwer West LGA, Benue State	4/03/2015
3.	Utikili Maurice	M	68yrs	Healer	Koti Akpoughul, Gwer West LGA, Benue State	4/03/2015
4.	Tindiir Mbakpenen	M	70yrs	Herbalist	Tse Tugh, Kaseyo-Uvir, Guma LGA, Benue State	10/03/2015
5.	Anyi Udor	M	75yrs	Herbalist	Mission Ward, NorthBank, Makurdi, Benue State	10/03/2015
6.	Oryiman Shaorga	M	75yrs	Farming	Tse Agagbe, Kunav-Sengev, Gwer West LGA, Benue State	10/03/2015
7.	Adeke Soja	M	71yrs	Farming	Ungwan Tiv, Kadarko, Keana LGA, Nasarawa State	10/03/2015
8.	Akodi Terver	M	39yrs	Farming	Tse-Ankye, Gwer West LGA, Benue State	1/4/2015
9.	Terngu Ukpoo (Dugbe Tenyi)	M	37yrs	Business man	Tse-Ortwav-Naka, G/West, LGA, Benue State	1/4/2015
10.	Uke Terfa (Ukoko-JP)	M	35yrs	Cyclist	Tse-Mkovul Gwer West LGA, Benue State	1/04/2015
11.	Tyodugh Aondoakaa	M	42yrs	Farming	Tse-Choorbo Mbapa, Gwer West, LGA, Benue State	1/04/2015

12.	Adinya Udewua	M	53yrs	Medicine Man	Daudu-Uikpam Rd., Mbawa, Mbayongo Guma LGA, Benue State	17/10/2015
13.	Agande Iorver	M	30yrs	Healer	Utsaazi, Katsina-Ala LGA, Benue State	5/12/2015
14.	Tersoo Donald Iorshe	M	30yrs	Applicant	Tse-Unam-Gambe Ushir, Gwer West LGA, Benue State	4/04/2016
15.	Theddeaus Mtsekon	M	45yrs	Vigilante	Jimba-Saghev- Gwer West LGA, Benue State	5/04/2016
16.	Lagu Stephen	M	38yrs	Civil servant	Tse Lagu-Mbakyooundu, Gwer West LGA, Benue State	5/04/2016
17.	Iorwua Felix Gbawuan	M	38yrs	Farming	Tse Nyikyaa –Agagbe, Gwer West LGA, Benue State	8/04/2016
18.	Tyavger Audu	M	40yrs	Farming	Tse-Aji, Gbaange/Tongov, Gwer West LGA, Benue State	15/04/2016
19.	Tyogyer Mbaka	M	47yrs	Farming	Tse-Aji Gbaange/Tongov, Gwer West LGA, Benue State	15/04/2016
20.	Timothy Anumah	M	36yrs	Business man	Abian-Sengev, Gwer West LGA, Benue State	22/04/2016
21.	Mama Dorcas Aleva	F	63yrs	Teaching	Gboko Town, Gboko LGA, Benue State	11/02/2017
22.	Mama Iniuun	F	73yrs	Farming	Gboko Town, Gboko LGA, Benue State	23/01/2017
23.	Akundushima Samuel	M	37yrs	Student	Behind St. James Catholic Church, North Bank, Makurdi, Benue State	10/03/2017
24.	Atsue Iorwase	M	43yrs	Farming	Gboko LGA, Benue State	16/03/2017
25.	Ajiva Iorumbur	M	46yrs	Farming	Gboko LGA, Benue State	16/03/2017
26.	Gbatse Udoji	M	48yrs	Farming	Gboko, LGA, Benue State	17/03/2017
27.	Elder Francis Ahar Kwende	M	51yrs	Civil Servant	Makurdi, LGA, Benue State	17/03/2017
28.	Shamange Nyietagher	M	48yrs	Farming	Gboko, LGA, Benue State	17/03/2017
29.	Nyajo Tyokighir	M	56yrs	Farming	Makurdi LGA, Benue State	18/03/2017
30.	Godwin Gosu Genda	M	62yrs	Vigilante	Jimba, Gwer West LGA, Benue State	26/04/2017
31.	Solomon Torkebi	M	36Yrs	Civil Servant	Naka, Gwer West LGA, Benue State	26/04/2017
32.	Shimayina Abwar	M	38Yrs	Farming	Naka, Gwer West LGA, Benue State	26/04/2017
33.	Mwuese Pila	F	54yrs	Trading	Akpehe, Makurdi LGA, Benue State	27/09/2018
34.	Fanyam Wende	F	46yrs	Trading	Akpehe, Makurdi LGA, Benue State	27/09/2018