

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRITS OF NDIUKE AND NGWUGWA/NJUJU ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF THOSE THEY POSSESS

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Abstract

It is only religion that is truly sensitive to the fullness of man's dignity, nature and potentialities; man cannot live by politics and science alone but ought to delve into the spiritual problems that have robbed some individuals of their dignity. The abnormal behaviours associated with spirit possession have led to misperception of their true character traits as they are sometimes misjudged as insane, dementia, rude, saucy and sometimes, overbearing. Spirit possessions like 'Agwu', 'Owummiri', 'Ogbanje', 'Ndiotu', 'Diuwa/Nwunyeuwa' 'Ndiuke' and 'Ngwugwa/Njuju' are not neurological, psychological or psychiatric problems rather; they are mystics and spiritual forces beyond human comprehension and control. Ndiuke (Evil spirits of dead children) and Ngwugwa/Njuju (Spirit of disappearance and wandering). This research method is qualitative and sociological in approach to investigate the influence of the spirits of Ndiuke and Ngwugwa/Njuju on the behaviours of those they possess and those related to them. As the name implies, Ndi means People while Uke means Age-Grade. Therefore, Ndiuke means Age- Grade evil spirits of dead children that possess children at birth, as neonates, infants, and teens even at the adolescent stage of life to old age. However, this research will be narrowed to Ndiuke and Ngwugwa/Njuju because they seem to be forgotten in the minds of researchers hence, the need for this paper to buttress the point that no matter how neglected it may seem, they are existing phenomena in religion and spirit possession.

Keywords: *Ndiuke, Ngwugwa/Njuju, Behaviour, Religion, Ethics, Wandering, Exorcism.*

Introduction

It is only religion that is truly sensitive to the fullness of man's dignity, nature and potentialities; man cannot live by politics and science alone (Mbiti 1969:274) but ought to delve into the spiritual problems that have robbed some individuals of their dignity. Spirit possessions like *Agwu*, *Owummiri/Agbara- Mmiri* (Mummy-Water or Water/Marine Spirit) *Ogbanje* (Changeling), *Ndiuke* (Evil spirits of dead children) and *Ngwugwa/Njuju* (Spirit of disappearance and wandering) manipulate the destiny and behaviours of individuals and make them awkward and abnormal. As the name implies, *Ndi* means People while *Uke* means Age-Grade (Onwugbenu

and Agburum, 2019). Therefore, *Ndiuke* means Age- Grade of evil spirits of dead children that possesses children at birth, as neonates, infants, and teens even at the adolescent stage of life to old age (Agburum and Nwafor, 2019), Ikenga-Metuh, (1987) in his Anambra dialect refers the evil spirits of dead children as '*Umu Aro*'; Edda people refer to this same evil spirit as *Ndiuke nmonwu* (Chima and Chima, 2020). A child possessed by this evil spirit yells mysteriously which ought to raise suspicion of its abnormality (Ezekwem, Nwazonobi, 2020). Children especially, neonates and infants ought not to be left alone in order to avoid the attraction of the *Ndiuke* spirit to the child (Nwafor, 2019). *Ndiuke* and *Ngwugwa/Njuju* victims are not neurological, psychological or psychiatric problems rather; they are mystics and spiritual forces beyond human comprehension and control that manipulates the consciousness of their victims. However, this research will be narrowed to *Ndiuke* and *Ngwugwa/Njuju* because they seem to be forgotten in the minds of researchers hence, the need for this paper to buttress the point that no matter how neglected it may seem, they are existing phenomena in religion and spirit possession. The abnormal behaviours associated with (*Ndiuke* and *Ngwugwa/Njuju*) evil spirit possessions have led to misperception of their true character traits as they are sometimes misjudged as insane, dementia, rude, saucy and sometimes, overbearing. This research method is qualitative and sociological in approach to investigate the influence of the spirits of *Ndiuke* and *Ngwugwa/Njuju* on the behaviours of those they possess and those related to them. This is the African belief, and while its application may not always appear correct, the religious man of any race will agree with the principle (Parrinder 1976, p.28). This world is a spiritual arena, in which is seen the interplay of psychic forces.

Expository analyses of Related Authors on *Ndiuke* and *Ngwugwa/Njuju* in Igboland

Some authors have written on spirit possession such as *Agwu* (Spirit of insanity, hardship and medicine) *Owummiri/Agbara- Mmiri*, (Mummy-Water or Water/Marine Spirit) *Ogbanje* (Changeling) but none in the knowing on *Ndiuke* and *Ngwugwa*. Hence, no direct literature on them to review except a few available works on spirit possession. In spite of this, Nwafor (2019) in a personal communication clarifies that *Ndiuke* is the evil spirits of dead children as ancestral spirits are the spirits of dead relatives who act as guardian spirits to their families. Whereas, *Ngwugwa/Njuju* is the spirit of disappearance and wandering on persons they possess.

In Parrinder's (1974, p.20-28) Chapter 2-captioned, 'A Spiritual Universe' of his African Traditional Religion submits that psychic power and the gods appear in the world in different manifestations, which are explained as being in grades or a

hierarchy. In other words, submitting that some spiritual forces are more effective and powerful sometimes based on their environment of operations. Parrinder connects animism and psychic force, psychic power and the gods, religion and magic and religion and society buttress that society suffers the malevolence of religion, at the same time the beneficiary of its benevolence.

Likewise, Ikenga-Metuh (1987, p.161-179) argues that among different African peoples, misfortunes may be interpreted as the work of evil spirits, witches, or sorcerers, but they may be also be attributed to the evil eye, broken taboos, perjured oaths, or even to the Supreme Being, the deities or ancestors. He recalls that many evil spirits are believed to go in groups and launch their attacks on human beings in groups. A greater number of them are believed to be evil spirits of the dead which are sometimes believed to operate according to their age groups. Ikenga-Metuh further clarifies that the Igbo believed that evil spirits of the dead are classified into three age groups: the '*Umu Aro*' (evil spirits of dead children); the '*Ogbonuke*' (evil spirits of dead young men), and *Akalogeli* (evil spirits of adults who died without offspring). Amongst these three evil spirits mentioned above, the '*Umu Aro*' (evil spirits of dead children) seem to be the *Ndiuke* (evil spirits of dead children) in this discourse but unfortunately, he mentioned it but did not discuss it either for lack of information or because it was not the focus of his study.

Behaviours of Victims of *Ndiuke* and *Ngwugwa/Njuju*

There are four factors that determine a child's behaviours and personal values such as emotion, cognition, conscience and society. Though psychologists might view spiritual possession as hallucination, the scientist sees no empirical proof of the basis of spirituality while neurologists might see the victims as having a sort of insanity or dementia. It is in this regard that James Austin, the American neurologist after having a spiritual encounter as revealed by Begley (1990) that,

Call it a mystical experience, a spiritual moment, even a religious epiphany, if you like, but Austin will not. Rather than interpret his instant of grace as proof of a reality beyond the comprehension of our senses, much less as proof of a deity, Austin took it as proof to existence of the brain." ...Austin's moment off in the underground therefore inspired him to explore the neurological underpinnings of spiritual and mystical experience. In order to feel that time, fear and self-consciousness have dissolved, he reasoned, certain brain circuits must be interpreted p.1.

Some of the behaviours of those possessed by *Ndiuke* can be likened to that of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) in medical terms as Miguel (2020), Anyanwu & Osuka, (2020) presented it in three categories: inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsivity. Other behaviours include being easily agitated, aggressive, lack of focus and switching moods.

***Anwu Nwonye Ga* ‘Sacred Time and Eco-Spirituality’ of *Ndiuke* Spirits Possessions**

Ndiuke spirits are more active at mid-morning sunrise that rises between 8 and 10 A. M. and in the evening at sunset between 5 P.M. and 6:30 P.M. This sun is called ‘*Anwu Nwonye Ga*’ (Sun of whose child is going), ‘*Anwu Nwiri-nwiri Abali*’ (Late evening Sun) in Imo State parlance; Enugu calls it ‘*Anwu ure enyashi*’; Edda people of Ebonyi State calls it ‘*Ogere Njebiga*’. These two periods of the day are deserted and lonely; considered to be dangerous periods for people to move or stay alone and most dangerously for children which signals caution for parents to be watchful over their children. It is strongly believed that these awkward times are the periods that evil spirits of all kinds roam about possessing their victims, inflicting them with stroke (*Mba-agbara*) and other infirmities and eventually, death (Chima, Ezekwem and Nwazonobi, 2020). Significantly, at these *Anwu nwonye ga*’ times, *Ndiuke* (evil spirits of dead children) of all ages visit their living age-grades alive to disturb them- eat and exchange gifts (Chima and Nwazonobi, 2020). These associations never yield anything good but turbulent and strife as they renew sicknesses and abnormal behaviours; take the souls of those they wish to take. Mothers are urged not to take their children especially, neonates and infants out at that awkward time. In fact, ‘*Anwu nwonye ga*’ is considered a sacred time. Evil utterances, oaths, curses and covenants made in these times mostly come to manifestations. Notably, ‘*Anwu nwonye ga*’ are sacred periods of misfortune, mishaps and misadventure that the wise ought to shun, wandering, violence and life-threatening adventures.

Sacred Time and Eco-Spirituality of *Ngwugwa/Njuju* Spirits Possessions Disappearance and Wandering

The evil spirit associated with *Ngwugwa* or *Njuju* according to the Igbo dialect in use in the environment. *Ngwugwa/Njuju* as it is called in Imo State is an evil force that can overpower and subdues a person’s consciousness, cause loss of memory, disappearance from one environment to another and wander aimlessly. Medically it is known as a wandering tendency (Anyanwu and Osuka, 2020). It is an evil spirit that attacks when its victim is alone at specific times of ‘*Anwu Nwonye Ga*’, on the road to the stream, in the bush, on the road to the market; sometimes in the house (Nwafor, 2019). This disappearance could be likened to the one Obadiah the

servant of Ahab accused Elijah of; when the latter asked the former to tell Ahab, Elijah is here 1Kings 18: 8. Obadiah in his fear of Elijah's disappearance says, "...that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not, and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me..." 1Kings,18:12. Ebonyi people of Izhi and Ezza call it '*Ekwo nji*' (Aliama and Ugo, 2019); Enugu calls it '*Akwukwo Nju*', (Agbo, 2019) and Idemmili people of Anambra state calls it '*Ndi-Uluchi*' (Izuakor, 2020). They believe that there is a particular leaf that possesses the evil spiritual power that can make its victim lose consciousness and wander to wherever the spirit leads them. Ebonyi South know it as '*Njuju*' has a dual forces-possessed leaf and the spirit itself which have the same function of causing, loss of memory and wandering (Azi, 2019).

When the *Ngwugwa* spirit possesses its victim, it can make them wander for days, weeks or months or even years as the case may be but the possessed person returns back home when the spirit leaves them, then, they will return back to normalcy (Anyanwu & Osuka, 2020). It raises tension in the neighbourhood each time it happens because the person's relatives may not know the actual cause of the disappearance until an investigation is carried out to ascertain the actual cause of the disappearance. If it is established that the cause of the disappearance is as a result of *Ngwugwa/Njuju* for those who believed that it is associated with an evil leaf in the bush then, that would raise the question of which part of the bush, farm or any other place that could be associated to it (Agbo and Aliama, 2019). This is why when someone overstays on an errand the question that follows would be "whether *Ngwugwa* or *Njuju* has possessed and taken the person away '*Ngwugwa o gwara na ya?*'" in Imo state parlance.

Victims of *Ndiuke* Spirits Possessions and Jinx

The jinxes associated with victims of the *Ndiuke* spirit are numerous. One of the features of *Ndiuke* jinxes is how it torments twin children. If any of the twins dies, the spirit of the dead one will continue to torment the living causing them to fall sick and sometimes kills them (Onwugbenu, 2020). To avoid such occurrence, if any of the twins dies, the one alive will be taken away from the vicinity to another place for their safety (Onwugbenu, 2020). As the child grows the *Ndiuke* spirit grows with them; metamorphosing into '*Ogbonuke*', 'the spirit of dead young men causing unexplainable failures in their lives no matter their efforts and experiences (Nwafor and Aliama, 2019). They are victims of unexplainable hatred from family, friends and society. *Ndiuke* spirits metamorphose into what is known as spirit husbands and wives. They pose as spouses to their victims and hinder them from getting married. It is difficult for them to get married when they are of the age of marriage no matter how handsome or beautiful they are. When they eventually get

married, they marry for records without enjoying their marriage no matter their efforts to make the marriage or relationships work. They are blamed for any wrong doings around them and suffer the punishment for a crime committed by others. They also suffer unexplainable infertility that refutes medications (Nwafor and Agburum, 2019). Nothing happens without cause is a strong belief in Southeast Nigeria.

Relatively, *Ndiuke* jinxes are believed to be prone to accidents, and casualties in any mishap or misfortune that occurs. Unfortunately, these jinxes affect anyone associated with their victims be it the victim's parents, siblings, friends and so on who might render any assistance to their victims to reject and hate them. *Ndiuke* jinx attacks the source of income of their helpers thereby causing untold hardships and poverty (Nwafor and Aliama, 2019). It is common to say that a man's business stopped thriving when he got married to his wife. They are unavoidably destructive and tactless, lack concentration and are ineffective in their duties.

The Influence of the Spirits of *Ndiuke* and *Ngwugwa/Njuju* on the Behaviours of their Victims

Any child under the influence of *Ndiuke* behaves abnormally. At the neonate and infant stage, they yell and writhe in suspected pains which sometimes were believed to be the afflictions they go through in the hands of the *Uke* spirit. They are emotionally hardened, brood in anger for insignificant things, are envious, intolerant, and irascible; at an adolescent stage, they are delinquent, mischievous, stubborn, obstinate, switches mood and are difficult (Nwafor, Nwazonobi and Aliama, 2019). At this point, the victims cannot act on their personal values; emotional, cognitive and behavioural. No wonder, Amadi (1982, p3) stresses that "Religion has played a particularly important role in ethical philosophy all down the ages because it has been a useful instrument for enforcing moral codes. "It would appear, then, that while man formulates the moral code, he enlists the influence of religion for its enforcement" (Amadi 1982, p6).

The stigmatisation of those possessed with *Ndiuke* and *Ngwugwa/Njuju*

A major cause of the stigmatisation of those possessed with *Ndiuke* is the misfortune associated with them. No reasonable person would want to be identified with misfortunes and other forces of that nature that truncates and redefines people's destinies. It is not out of place for one to stay out of trouble especially when it involves spiritual matters that are beyond capacities. Anyone that accommodates them shares in their misfortunes.

In the case of *Ngwugwa/Njuju* of little children, other children avoid the victims based on fear of the unknown. Sometimes, some victims not all of *Ngwugwa/Njuju*

would come back a changed person sometimes as sacred specialists or behave in manners different from what they were known to be before their encounter with *Ngwugwa/Njuju* spirit (Anyanwu and Osuka, 2020). In such a situation, friends and relatives attitudes change towards them.

The Exorcise of the Spirit of *Ndiuke* and *Ngwugwa/Njuju* off their Victims

Every problem in life has its solution to nip it in the bud therefore; the cases of *Ndiuke* and *Ngwugwa/Njuju* are not exceptions. The exorcism here is on *Ndiuke* as investigations prove that immediately the spirit of *Ngwugwa* left its victim, some of the victims returns to normalcy (Nwazonobi, Nwafor and Aliama, 2019). In other words, exorcism of *Ndiuke* will be considered for discussion. According to Nwafor (2019) who doubles as a Traditional Medicine Pharmacist and an Exorcist emphasises that exorcism of *Ndiuke* spirits depends on the stage of it as it is linked up with Age-Grade and of two types; *Ndiuke Mmiri* (evil marine spirits of dead children and *Ndiuke Ohia* (evil bush/forest spirits of dead children). Nwafor (2019) avers that it is easier, cheaper to exorcise infants *Ndiuke*. He says that little children require edible items attracted to children like biscuits, soft drinks, writing materials, all colours of candles, wears, teddies/toys/babies, white and black cloths, white and black basins and money. These items are shared in two- the black sets of the ritual items are for the bush while the white set is for the stream/river.

In adolescent exorcism, the items require the items those of their Age -Grades are attracted to, such as the items mentioned above, white and black fowls for male adolescents and white and black hens for female adolescents, underwear and money which ranges from N200,000 to N250,000 (Nwafor and Agburum, 2019). However, adult exorcism involves all the items mentioned above plus male and female goats depending on the sex of the victim to totally propitiate the evil spirit of *Ndiuke*. A victim that just wants to pledge money pending on when they are ready for the ritual pays N80,000.

Recommendations

This investigation recommends that parents should keep watch over their children; if not for any other time, at birth, neonate and infants as they cannot resist or report to their parents their experiences as regards this *Ndiuke*. If in any way parents notice abnormal behaviour or unexplainable sicknesses or cries in their children, should act fast to break the link between their children and *Ndiuke* to prevent their children from untold suffering and hardships in their lives.

People should empathise with victims of *Ndiuke* and *Ngwugwa/Njuju* spirits because they are victims and not the perpetrators of the evil they suffer rather,

from the powers beyond their control therefore, should not be compelled to emotional trauma and depression.

Parents should act as detectives over their children so as to know when they have sudden changes in health and behaviour. Earlier intervention would ascertain when the changes are medical or spiritual manipulations and act fast before it escalates to the extent of truncating their destinies and dignities.

Conclusion

The abnormal behaviour associated with (*Ndiuke* and *Ngwugwa/Njuju*) evil spirit possessions has led to misperception of their true character traits as they are sometimes misjudged as insane, dementia, rude, saucy and sometimes, overbearing. Normally, an action that is involuntary like *Ndiuke* and *Ngwugwa* involuntarily done unintentionally but without the relevant volitional ability, ought not to be subjected to moral judgement. "It is obvious that there is a strong link between morality and religion... as ethics deals with decisions about what is right and wrong in life, there is a clear overlap with religion" (Taylor, Eyre and Knight p.118, 2008).

It is important to note that *Diuwa/Nwunyeuwa* (Spirit husband/ wife) is an offshoot of *Ndiuke*. From the time the spirit of *Ndiuke* enters the child, it grows with the child to adulthood and metamorphoses into *Diuwa/Nwunyeuwa*. *Diuwa/Nwunyeuwa* controls the marital behaviour of its victims. *Ndiuke*, *Ngwugwa/Njuju* spirits are mischievous or evil and require a series of rituals to appease these wicked spirits for their victims to succeed and thrive in their life endeavours. The relatives and other people around these victims in discourse are sometimes affected because they sponsor the exorcism and also suffer emotionally.

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