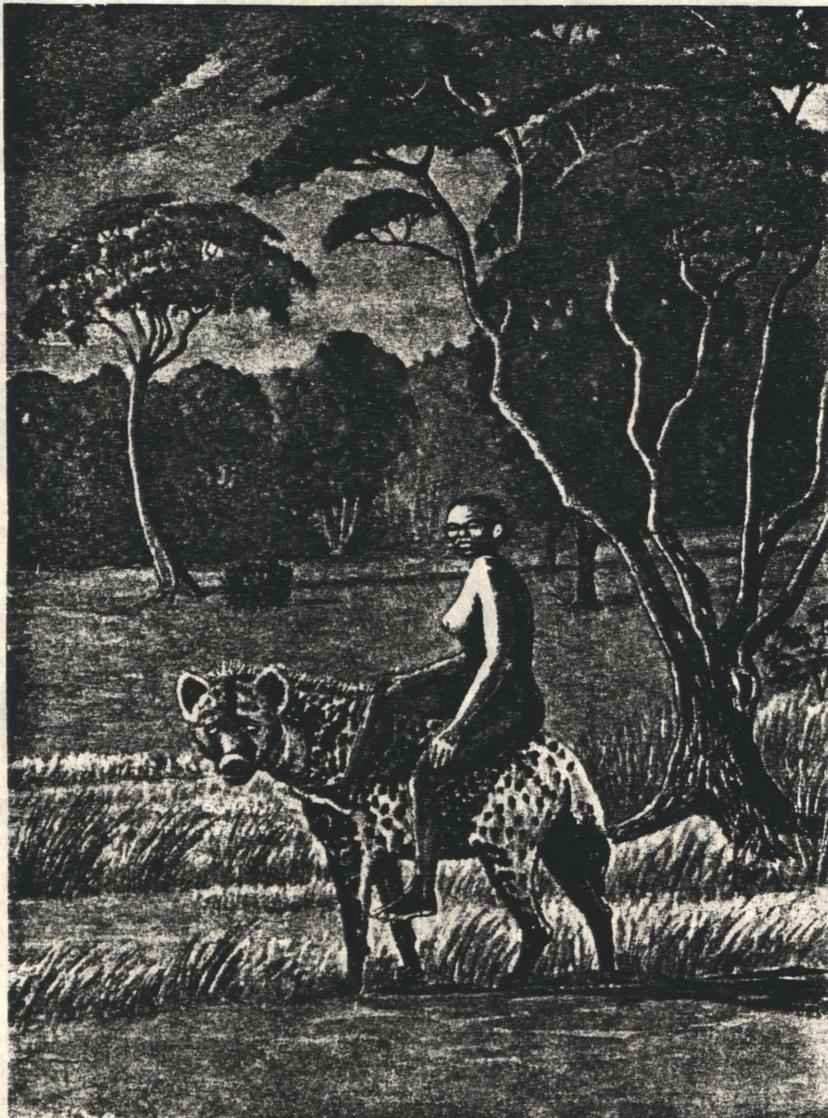


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The African Origins Of Vampirism (2-16)



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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the latest issue of the Journal. While researching an article on vegetative vampires, specifically the Yam Spirit of West Africa, I inadvertently unearthed several references to vampirism. I decided to explore this matter further and, in a very short time, had amassed a plethora of related material. This issue and the following are the product of those labors.

What amazed me more than anything else was not so much the wealth of material extant on African tribal beliefs but that such material had been largely ignored by vampirologists. Although Montague Summers, in his The Vampire: His Kith and Kin, cites several examples of African "vampirism," the majority are not germane to the subject at all. Ironically, when others have written on the subject of vampirism and have cited Africa within this context, the same tired examples quoted by Summers are trotted out once again. A prime example of this repetitiousness is Anthony Masters' The Natural History of the Vampire (NY, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1972), which is largely a rewrite of Summers' aforementioned book anyway. Perhaps one of the reasons why vampirologists have ignored the vast continent of Africa is because vampirism is intimately associated with the practice of witchcraft and is seldom treated as a separate category. This is unfortunate, as further research would have revealed that the deceased witch is potentially just as malignant as the living one and possesses many of the classical features associated with the European vampire. Indeed, exhumations of suspect witches were commonly performed in Africa at one time, a practice seldom encountered elsewhere other than in European accounts concerning vampires. As with the vampire, the same tell-tale signs of post-mortem guilt were sought for in Africa: swelling, incorruption and blood on or about the corpse. When these characteristics were in evidence, the same extreme measures were taken by the African native as those resorted to by the European peasant to annihilate the body, that is, cremation and decapitation. My researches also revealed frequent mention of zombification in Africa, another feature largely overlooked by others.

I suspect, however, this grievous neglect of African tribal beliefs pertaining to the undead goes much deeper than sheer ignorance on the researcher's part. Vampirologists have a tendency to treat vampirism as if it existed in a vacuum, largely ignoring any cross-cultural parallels. This exclusivity of treatment smacks of cultural elitism. No doubt this accounts for all the counts and countesses that which permeate the popular (mis)conception of vampirism in the Western World, even though traditional vampires were largely drawn from the peasant classes. The above is all the more ironic since vampirologists are always trumpeting the fact that vampirism is universal in nature (which it is not), yet seldom do they educe any examples to this effect. I've railed against this exclusivity in vampirology before without, it seems, any perceptible success. Perhaps if I termed the whole subject of vampirology inherently racist, rather than elitist, I might see more constructive results.

Be that as it may, I'd like to dedicate this issue of the Journal to Valerie E. Smith, whose untiring support over the years is greatly appreciated. I still believe in your song.

See you next time.

THE AFRICAN ORIGINS OF VAMPIRISM

The practice of witchcraft in Africa is ancient, pervasive and continues unabated to this day. (1) Like her European counterpart, the African witch is capable of subverting the inherent properties of life in all manner of ways through all manner of means. Cattle plague, crop failure, infertility in both men and women, outbreaks of epidemic disease and unaccountable deaths are all believed to be the result of witchcraft. Furthermore, the African witch is capable of making men pregnant, removing fetuses from expectant mothers and extracting various internal organs, as the heart and liver. When in a sportive mood African witches can also remove the entire head. According to an Akan informant: "They say that their principal game is football [i.e., soccer]. They are said to be able to cut off a man's head during his sleep to use it as their ball. If they have finished, they put it on again. The story is told that one night the witches cut off the head of a fellow and went to play ball. When they returned it, they put it on again the wrong way round. The next morning the fellow slept on in this twisted way and people wondered at him." (2)

It is believed that the various abilities associated with the practice of witchcraft can be acquired through a variety of ways. It can be inherited, purchased, perpetuated through reincarnation, or transmitted to some unwitting convert through poisoned food stuffs. Perhaps the most extreme examples of witchcraft transference are to be found among the tribal societies of Ghana. According to one informant: "My mother gave me my witchcraft by vomiting three times into my mouth." (3) Another claims: "If you want to be a witch, you go into the bush together with a witch who has become tired of her witchcraft. You both strip yourselves naked, bow down and let anus touch anus. Then a snake will leave her body and enter yours, and you have become a witch." (4)

Like her British counterpart, the African witch maintains a vast array of animal familiars, of which the snake is the most common. According to one informant: "My obeye [i.e., animal familiar] is a snake, Onanka, and I keep it inside my vagina. If I want to go out to a witch meeting at night I leave it behind to make my husband sleep soundly till I return. When my husband wants to have sexual intercourse with me I take the snake out of my vagina and hide it and return it when my husband is finished." (5) According to another informant: "In 1941 a little girl at J. went to have a bath and in the bathroom she was bitten by a snake and died. This was in the morning. The mother of this girl was staying in another town about 38 miles away. The snake was killed by the men in the house. After about three weeks, the mother said that she was suffering from pains in her neck, and one day confessed that she had killed her daughter. She had sent the snake to bite her, and because the snake's head was cut off, she was also suffering in the neck." (6) Among the Balovale of Northern Rhodesia these snake familiars are said to possess, hydra-like, numerous human heads and those who fall victim to their poisonous bites are said to, in turn, become like creatures in death. (7)

Other common animal familiars include the hyena, jackal, bat and owl. The latter is perhaps the most feared of all the African witch's familiars. According to the Tshi-speaking people of West Africa: "The cry of an owl near a house is believed to be prognostic of the death of one of the inmates. A common mode of signifying 'owl' in conversation is the phrase: 'The bird which makes one afraid.' One of the words having the meaning 'owl' is pehtu, and pehtu-wuh, literally, 'Owl's death,' is used to mean a sudden or violent death." According to the Vais of Liberia: "[They] consider the owl the king of witches. They believe that some old king transformed himself into the owl and became the king of witchcraft. The owl is called huhu. Whenever the cry of this bird is heard they tremble with fear. It is said when an owl sits upon a home at least one of its inmates is sure to die." (9) According to the Ewe-speaking people: "The only mode of escape in such a case is to catch the bird and break its legs and wings, which has the effect of breaking the legs and arms of the person who sent it." (10)

Another animal familiar is the nkala, a giant crab: "It is about four feet from head to head -- for it has a head at either end -- and is nearly as broad as it is long. Each head resembles the head of a hippo, having the same lumps on it by the eyes. When it is eating a person's shadow it eats with both heads simultaneously." (11) Yet another is the shell of a very large snail: "This shell is considered to be capable of becoming a very powerful weapon in magical warfare when properly treated by the witch-doctor. The Lunda say that it will turn into a magical snail and will carry a knife at night and crawl to the intended victim's hut and cut his throat." (12) Lastly, there is the Nyalumaya, a wooden figurine reminiscent of the creature which menaced Karen Black in the "Prey" segment of Trilogy of Terror: "Nyalumaya is a figurine representing a novice with nascent breasts, and is called by the name of a young girl, killed by 'medicine' to activate it ... The girl's blood is smeared on the figurine, and mixed with medicine pressed into a hole in its head. The medicine makes it 'walk about.' Nyalumaya is equipped by its owner with a knife, and sent out to kill his personal enemies." (13) African witches are also capable of exploiting the living and the dead to act as their familiars, a matter which will be discussed at greater detail later in this paper.

The African witch is said to be capable of transforming herself into an equal number of animal forms, from flies to elephants. Whether actual metamorphosis takes place is a topic of debate among African tribalists, as it was among European theologians concerning the werewolf. There are those who believe that the witch simply animates an animal phantasm of her own creation, perhaps through the production of ectoplasm, or enters an animal in her astral form and takes possession of its movements. According to P. Amary Talbot, in his The Peoples of Southern Nigeria: "Usually the soul is thought to leave a man's body while this is in a trance or asleep, and to assume the likeness of an animal; sometimes it is supposed to enter in, and 'possess,' an ordinary animal in the bush and in rarer cases the actual body of the man is transformed ... The ability to effect transformation is sometimes inborn and sometimes obtained through the purchase of certain 'medicines.' In no case known to me is the soul put into animals, etc., for the sake of safety; such a practice would double the chances of death or injury, since it is usually thought that any action on either of the two reciprocals, whether on the man in the town or the were-animal in the bush, affects the other in the same way. If the one is killed, the other dies also." (14) Talbot, whose knowledge of occultism is surprisingly broad, attempts to interpret the African belief in metamorphosis within contemporary metaphysical terms: "It has probably arisen from various causes; one, the faculty to send out a(n astral) 'double ...'; another, the power to effect ectoplasmic materialisations, though this could perhaps only apply to phenomena occurring in the immediate neighbourhood of the medium; and a third, to remembrance of occurrences on the astral plane, in dreams, etc. Also, if it is possible for the astral to assume the form of an animal, then it is not perhaps beyond the bounds of possibility for a man's consciousness to be also transferred to this, when it is remembered that in hypnotic experiments the subject's sensibility can be conveyed to another person in the room and even to a glass of water -- a process called exteriorisation of sensibility." (15)

African witches are also said to frequently indulge in acts of cannibalism, necrophagy and vampirism. Once again, it is believed that such acts occur on a psychic, rather than a physical, plane. Geoffrey Parrinder, in his West African Psychology, attributes all such acts to "a product of the imagination, an obsessional neurosis." (16) Be that as it may, the following represent tribal beliefs concerning these practices:

"Leaving their bodies behind them, they go to the house of the victim, enter by the roof, disturbing nothing; and finally enter the stomach of the sleeping person. Thence they wander about the lungs, heart, or liver, and wound him with their 'secret spears.' Next day the man is ill, and the day following he dies. If the post mortem reveals ulcers on heart, lungs, or liver, it is entirely satisfactory evidence that death was due to witchcraft ... If the culprits are not discovered, they bring the body of the victim to the surface without disturbing the soil (an art the secret of which is now confined to a very few persons), and indulge in a ghoulish cannibal feast." (17)

"A person killed by witchcraft is supposed to die from the effects of a poison secretly administered or infused into his system by the witch; or the latter is supposed to assume sometimes the form of some animal, as a cat, or a rat, which, during the night, sucks the person's blood from a small and imperceptible wound, by which a lingering illness and death are produced." (18)

"Perhaps the most terrible power held by a witch or wizard is that of 'sucking out the heart' of a man without his knowledge. They can sit on the roof of the house at night and suck out the heart while he sleeps, and without the aid of some strong Juju, he will never know what is killing him." (19)

"Witches were also believed to be able to take blood from their victims, and an ulcer that would not heal, especially one that grew larger or went gangrenous despite treatment, was likely to be regarded as visible evidence of continued blood-sucking by a witch." (20)

"A constant charge against sorcerers in West African tribes is that they have made a person sick by stealing and eating the sick one's 'heart,' and that the invalid cannot recover till the 'heart' is returned." (21)

"Obayifo. [A] wizard, or more generally witch. A kind of human vampire whose chief delight is to suck the blood of children whereby the latter pine and die." (22)

"Witches are credited with the power of transforming their heart-souls (okan) into birds or cats. In these objective forms they prowl around for their prey and suck the blood of their would-be victims." (23)

"As witches are supposed to catch the life-soul, it is only a variation if they are said to act as vampires and to suck the blood of their victims. [According to an informant:] 'They seek the essence of the victim's blood ... If a person's blood is sucked out it can make him lean or give him something like consumption or coughs'" (24)

"A witch sometimes possesses a stick with which he beats the graves of his victims, making them rise and follow him to a spot where he and his cohorts devour them. Other witches rely upon hyenas to exhume victims. If the corpse is fresh, it is eaten by the witch and his cohorts, but if it is decomposed it is given to the hyena." (25)

"Witches are also believed to eat human flesh; they feast on the corpses of their victims which they dig up and are also believed to eat any corpse they may find ... Witches are said to use human arms to stir their beer, which gives it a particular strength." (26)

"They dig up recently buried corpses and dissect them ... Some of these parts are kept, for skulls and arms are alleged to part of the magical paraphernalia through which witches kill people. Other parts, particularly internal organs, are said to be eaten. It is the eating of human flesh which enables witches, many of whom are elderly women, to run very fast. They cannot speak at night, according to some accounts, for human hearts taken from corpses are stuck in their throats." (27)

"Witches can, of course, change into anything they like, and they often feed on human flesh, their chief mode of obtaining victims being to turn themselves into beautiful girls." (28)

"In the night she leaves her body and goes off to foregather with other witches with whom she joins in wild and unspeakably wicked revels, during which they feast upon the 'hearts' of people. The people whose hearts have thus been eaten sicken soon afterwards and die." (29)

"When the witches meet they are believed to gather round a pot called a baisea ... The pot is often supposed to contain the 'blood' of the victims. This 'blood' appears to ordinary eyes as mere water, but it contains the vitality of the victim. And though the victim has lost none of his tangible blood and bleeds in the normal way when cut, the essential properties of his blood have been 'sucked' and transferred to the pot to be drunk by the witches. Occasionally when a witch is arrested, confesses, and consents to reform, she begins by vomiting all the 'blood' she has ever sucked." (30)

"The most favoured meeting place for witches is at the grave of someone who has recently died and is buried in a cave or under a tree in the woods. They enter the grave and remove pieces of flesh from the body and eat them with enjoyment. For this reason the Mazezuru guard their relatives' graves for about six days after the burial." (31)

When witchcraft was suspected in the past the accused was subjected to a variety of ordeals to ascertain his guilt or innocence. Torture was commonly practiced to elicit confessions. Poisonous brews, derived chiefly from Calabar beans or the bark of the sasswood tree, were commonly administered to the accused by the witch doctor. If the former regurgitated the brew or sickened and died from the effects of the poison his guilt was confirmed. G. Cyril Claridge, in his Wild Bush Tribes of Tropical Africa, cites an extreme example of this: "Perhaps the most revolting practice in connection with the administration of the poison, is that which provides the priest (ngol' a nkasa) with part of the virus of which it is composed. All the fluid from the corpse imagined to have been killed by the witch, is collected during the process of its decomposition and sent to the priest, who mixes it with the nkasa bark powder. This is administered by the mouth to the accused as part of the ordeal draught." (32)

Another common ordeal administered in West Africa was that known as the "carrying of the corpse": "The dead body of a person who had died a strange death was carried by either two or four men ... The 'corpse' was asked questions and answered 'yes' or 'no' by the way it 'made the carriers sway or knock forward.' In this way the corpse could knock against the guilty person." (33)

Punishment for witchcraft in the past was invariably death and the execution was summarily carried out as soon as the individual's guilt was established. Witches were commonly strangled, drowned or clubbed to death. However, cruel and unusual punishments were often reserved for those poor unfortunates found guilty of witchcraft. Occasionally, as in the Niger Delta, the witch was "tied up between two posts and the people came and threw spears at him until he died." (34) Even more extreme is the following method: "There exists a traditional way of killing a witch or sorcerer. The tongue was pulled out and pinned to the chin with a thorn or stick to prevent the man's cursing his killers with his dying breath and so causing deaths. The witch was then impaled on a sharpened stake." (35)

The remains of the executed witch were seldom accorded proper burial but were commonly burnt or left exposed in the bush for scavenging predators. The head was sometimes cut off to prevent it from reuniting with the body following death. All these drastic measures were deemed imperative, as it was believed the witch often retained her powers even in death.

When the suspicion of witchcraft attached itself to an individual recently deceased, an exhumation was often performed to ascertain the validity of such an accusation. Such a procedure was considered of paramount importance, as it was believed that the witch's powers remained unabated after death. In those tribal societies where the belief in reincarnation was professed, it was deemed necessary to destroy any such corpses and thus break the cycle of rebirth, as the witch was believed capable of being born anew with her powers intact. As with the European vampire, such tell-tale signs as blood in the burial plot, incorruption, and any abnormal swelling of the corpse were considered indicative of guilt. The following examples testify to this effect:

"Whether a person were a witch or not was discovered by exhuming the body some time after death, when, if she had been guilty of this crime, the corpse would be found quite preserved as if only just interred." (36)

"It sometimes happens that a witch is not discovered during her life and is buried in the odour of sanctity. After death, however, she is thought often to come back and do ill to, or play tricks on, the living -- especially in the way of vampirism. In such a case a small hole is usually found near the grave by means of which she is able to come out in the form of a rat or other small animal. The body is then exhumed and found to be in perfect condition, as if only just interred. Numerous instances of this vampirism are said to occur among the Semi-Bantu. In such a case the body is burnt, as with the Albanians, whereupon the witch is said to have no power to manifest herself again." (37)

"It was not apparently the custom of the Masupa Verre to fumigate the body or peel off the skin except in the case of a corpse which had swelled up after death. This was taken as a sign that the person had been a witch. The peeled skin was buried separately from the rest of the body." (38)

"[The Gengle and Kugama] have also the Verre belief that if a body swells up after death the dead man had practised witchcraft in his lifetime, the swelling being due to the presence of his victims." (39)

"The Kugama keep the body for thirty-six hours to see if it swells, for should it do so the deceased was a wizard and his familiar is attempting to escape." (40)

Sometimes such superficial signs are deemed insufficient or lacking and therefore crude autopsies are performed on the corpse, as the following examples attest:

"And the reproach of witchcraft follows one after death. If the post mortem shows marks on the internal organs, the person has died of witchcraft; but if the bowels are swollen or blackened, either to the right or to the left, the dead man was beyond doubt himself a wizard; the swollen condition indicates clearly the presence of the two serpents which were the source of his secret powers." (41)

"As a rule the body of such a person is opened up after death and the witchcraft -- usually thought to be in the form of a small bat or bird, or occasionally a black butterfly -- extracted, partly so that she should not be reincarnated as a witch and partly to avoid trouble from the soul of the dead. If this is not done, vampirism is thought to take place and the body to remain quite fresh in the grave for months and even years." (42)

"[Among the Mbembe:] On the death of a supposed witch, the body is cut open and the witchcraft -- some of which exists in the heart, some in the eyes and some in the occiput, and which resembles a bat but about half the size, with four teeth at the back of the mouth -- is extracted. If the body is that of a witch, the blood only spouts out of the heart the day after this is cut ... The head of a witch was always placed inside a cooking pot, so that she might not see the way to earth again." (43)

"[Among the Ekoi:] The body of anyone suspected of [witchcraft] is examined after death and if his, or her, guilt is proved from the existence in the heart of an object like a small bat with two teeth in the upper and two in the lower jaw, the corpse is cut to pieces and burnt and the ashes scattered about to prevent return." (44)

"[Among the Keaka:] A man suspected of witchcraft was always hanged ... At the 'examination' of the body after death the abdomen was cut open and the ribs cleft through on each side and then pushed back over the face so that the internal organs might be properly inspected. If any of these were diseased in certain ways, the man or woman was held guilty." (45)

"The Obang, like many Keaka, observed the same custom of 'examination' of the corpse; if blood was found in the mouth it was thought that he had, in his were-form, eaten a man in the bush." (46)

"The pythons are believed to be visible in an autopsy, a 'swollen bowel' (ubula) in a corpse being a typical mark of a witch. When the bowel is swollen, they take it out and say: 'It is a python, he was a witch.'" (47)

"An autopsy is performed in public at the edge of the grave ... Two lateral gashes are made in the belly and one end of the intestines is placed in a cleft branch and they are wound round it. After the other end has been severed from the body another man takes it and unwinds the intestines as he walks away from the man holding the cleft branch. The old men walk alongside the entrails as they are stretched in the air and examine them for witchcraft-substance ... I have been told that if no witchcraft-substance were discovered in a man's belly his kinsmen might strike his accusers in the face with his intestines." (48)

"In many cases post-mortem examinations are made with the view of finding the actual witch; I have known the mouth of the aorta to be cut out of a corpse, and shown as unanswerable proof that the man had the actual power of witchcraft ... And, similarly, I have known the fimbriated extremities of the fallopian tubes in a woman held up as proof of her having been a witch. The ciliary movements of these fimbriae were regarded as the efforts of her 'familiar' at the process of eating. The decision was that she had been 'eaten' to death by her own offended familiar." (49)

"Most Kaguru said that there are no ways except divination and ordeals which would reveal whether or not a person is a witch. But some Kaguru believe that if a corpse is filled with maggots, it is an indication that the dead person was a witch." (50)

"Boloki [i.e., witchcraft] is the activity which emanates from the likundu libe (evil-infested intestine). Before the advent of the white people it was possible to cut open the dead moloki [i.e., witch] and display the likundu for all to see ... There are still plenty of elders in the village who can testify to having seen the source of boloki held before their eyes before the trial by poison was banned." (51)

"If anybody dies suddenly and mysteriously, it is believed that he was either a witch or has been witched. A post mortem examination is held. If certain portions inside are found black and the sua [i.e., a native substance used in poison ordeals] refuses to float, the person is pronounced a witch ... The body is dishonored, deprived of all death ceremonies, and is hurried outside the limits of the town." (52)

"Occasionally a person dead within comparatively recent years can be identified as an akalagoli [i.e., witch], the remedy is to dig the body up. When this is done the doctor gets medicine, draws a circle round the grave, plants his horn upon it and runs round it; all this to secure that the akalagoli does not escape. Then he takes a piece of earth and rubs the heart of the dead man and burns it. He cuts off the head and cuts up the body." (53)

"Ko'du [i.e., witchcraft] is found in one's belly, and in the case of an autopsy is drawn out with the entrails. It is of roundish shape, of various sizes; sometimes it is like a man's thumb, but it may be as thick as a boy's fist. The Golo think it may be even bigger than that. Inside several substances may be found, of which some hair and tiny pebbles seem to be the commonest." (54)

"In doubtful cases of death, i.e., in all cases not arising from actual violence, when blood shows in the killing, the Bantu of the S.W. Coast make post-mortem examinations. Notably common is this practice among the Cameroons and Batanga region tribes. The

body is cut open to find in the entrails some sign of the path of the injected [sic?] witch. I am informed that it is the lung that is most usually eaten by the spirit. If the deceased is a witch-doctor it is thought, as I have mentioned before, that his familiar spirit has eaten him internally, and he is opened with a view of securing and destroying his witch. In 1893 I saw a village in Kacongo five unpleasant-looking objects stuck on sticks. They were the livers and lungs, and in fact the plucks, of witch-doctors, and inhabitants informed me they were the witches that had been found in them on post-mortems and then been secured." (55)

Although the witch's corpse may be returned to the grave and reburied, the remains are burnt in most instances. According to C.K. Meek, in his The Northern Tribes of Nigeria: "Here, again, the intention is less revenge and contempt or gluttony [i.e., cannibalism] than the necessity of destroying utterly the dead man's spirit, that he may not seek vengeance after death or continue his nefarious activity; for a man's soul remains active until his body is wholly destroyed." (56) This belief, perhaps, may lay behind the customary practice of burning witches and vampires in the Middle Ages of Europe.

Before this article addresses its next subject, I would like to backtrack just a bit. I failed to mention, in my section on tribal ordeals, two other tests which are sometimes applied to individuals suspected of witchcraft. The first one is that of the antelope horn, or chilola: "Two men take hold of a big horn (e.g. the horn of a sable antelope) and grip it. The horn is quiescent when they are near any innocent person, but when they approach the guilty one the horn makes their hands go up and down violently (pump-handle fashion) over the guilty person's head ... This method is also used to find the spirit of a dead man who is causing death or sickness. It will lead the people holding the horn to the right grave, even many miles away (described to me as having done this for as much as 16 miles). Having had the grave whence works the disturbing spirit indicated, the corpse is exhumed and some (or all) of the bones, and any beads or other ornaments worn by it, are taken, broken up and crushed and put in horns to be used for divination work. Then a fire is made in the dug-up grave." (57)

The second is that of "smelling out," in which the witch-doctor singles out the guilty party from a group of people. Although most ethnologists apply this term in a metaphorical sense, much in the same manner as one would use the term "I smell a rat," several accounts suggest a more literal basis. According to G. Cyril Claridge, in his Wild Bush Tribes of Tropical Africa: "It is believed that he [i.e., the witch] has an organ of scent such as exists among the civet order. For this reason the witch priest has invented a special fetish by means of which he is able to smell the effluvia of the scamp through the head of the image. In this way the professional tracks the rogue down with the certainty of a hound on the trail of a fox." (58) Barrie Reynolds, in his Magic, Divination and Witchcraft among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia, attributes a more sinister origin to this malodor: "Finally, where a diviner seeks out cannibals and necrophagers he does it with his nose, for they have on their fingers the smell of human flesh they have handled. This smell is only perceptible by witchfinders and by similar experts who, to emphasize their peculiar powers, frequently sniff vigorously when in the company of other people." (59) Ghosts, too, are said to emit a distinctive stench. A native informant told Talbot: "They [i.e., the witch doctors] can smell the odour, too, for the odour of ghosts is very strong and terrible." (60) One of the peculiarities of the European vampire is its offal stench as well.

The African witch, however, has no monopoly on mischief making. Several other categories of beings are believed to exist which prove troublesome to the living. The first category is that of ancestor spirits whose displeasure is easily aroused, resulting in illness and misfortune. They are just as easily pacified with appropriate sacrificial offerings and need not concern us further. (61) The other category is that of the evil undead. This broad category can be further divided into two sub-categories, that of independent spirits, those which operate freely on their own, and that of subject spirits,

those which have been "pressed" against their will into the services of a witch. Independent spirits consist largely of deceased malefactors and suicides, whereas subject spirits comprise largely guiltless individuals who have been caught up in an evil set of circumstances beyond their control. This sub-category of unfortunate beings can be further divided into two groups, those which are disincarnate souls and those which retain their corporeal form after "death." I place death in quotes, as the recent revelations of Wade Davis in his book The Serpent and the Rainbow suggest otherwise. Davis believes that individuals who become zombis have unknowingly been given a prepared decoction, of which one of the prime ingredients is the puffer fish. This marine denizen contains a potent chemical in its skin known as tetrodotoxin, one of the most poisonous of all nonprotein substances. It is primarily this toxin that stultifies the individual into a comatose state simulating death. When revived, the hapless individual is fed further drugs which make him compliant to his master's will. (62) Ironically, Davis fails to evidence any African parallels to that of Haitian zombification, even though examples are fairly numerous. Perhaps the puffer fish is not native to African waters. Even if present, how to account for those instances of zombification in the interior of Africa? Perhaps these medicines are prepared in one area and sold elsewhere. Lawrence G. Green, in his Old Africa's Last Secrets, suggests a possible solution: "Lieut. M.C. van Staaten of the Basutoland Mounted Police made a queer discovery while investigating one of these [ritual] murders shortly after World War II. He seized a native drug known as maime, a sort of Basuto chloroform which is administered by the murderers so that the victim will accompany them quietly to the place of killing. One whiff or sip is sufficient. The victim acts like an automaton, and is incapable of resistance. Yet this strange drug remained a secret until the trial of Manapo Koeneho and three others in 1946 for ritual murder." (63) The following citations represent examples of the evil and not so evil undead:

"[Witches] also have the power to raise the dead and to capture a departed spirit before it reaches its spirit home ...; they turn it into a ghost with which they annoy and frighten people, particularly the kinsmen of the deceased." (64)

"The apparently fundamental human fear of the living dead is given form in the isithfuntela (umkhova), and, a more recent importation from European mythology, the isiporo ('spook'). The first of these is always sent by witches and is the disinterred corpse of a victim, enslaved by them to do their bidding. The witch is said to raise the corpse to life, cut out the tongue, and drive wooden pegs through the brain, so that it 'will become stupid.' Itithfuntela are extremely tall and black and have the power of hypnotizing (ukuthwobula) a person so that he will be drawn towards them like a bird is attracted by a snake. Their appearance is so ghastly that people who see them become mad; some informants say that itithfuntela attack their victims by driving a steel nail (isikhonkwane) through the brain and pushing earth into the ears and nostrils, 'so that the person becomes dull.'" (65)

"The question at once arises who these omniscient beings might be. The answer is that they comprise the sorcerers, for in Dahomey, as in so many other Negro cultures, the essence of sorcery lies in obtaining control over a human spirit to do the bidding of the worker of evil magic. Thus it was recounted several times how one individual or another, who was thought to be dead, had been encountered in Togoland or on the Gold Coast or in Nigeria. Such individuals, however, did not recognize their old friends, even though addressed by name. They were soulless beings, whose death was not real but resulted from the machinations of sorcerers who made them appear as dead, and then, when buried, removed them from their graves and sold them into servitude in some far-away land." (66)

"These spirits haunt woods and waste places and are said to correspond more to the Swahili 'Shaitani'; they are evil spirits and are supposed to be the disembodied relics of people who have killed their neighbours by the help of black magic, and that the Supreme Being has banished these Aimu to the woods where they wander

about without anybody to care for them by sacrificing to them. They are a vindictive crew and enter into people who are working in distant fields and cause them to become seized with a kind of madness; persons so affected return to their villages, moan, groan and roll about and the Aiimu speak through the mouth of the possessed person ..." (67)

"Another manifestation is that of the uvengwa. It is claimed to be not simply spiritual, but tangible. It is the self-resurrected spirit and body of a dead human being. It is an object of dread, and is never worshipped in any manner whatever ... It is white in color, but the body is variously changed from the likeness of the original human body. Some say that it has only one eye, placed in the centre of the forehead. Some say that its feet are webbed like an aquatic bird." (68)

"Some people at or before death are, as we have seen, 'pressed' and their ghosts taken as slaves by the witches. These ghosts are variously named: mazwa, tuzwa, bashikazwa -- all forms of the same word. There is some idea that these are not always in the charge of witches; perhaps they escape or survive them; anyhow they act as free agents. They cause disease, sometimes, by entering into a person. They waylay people and strike them dead. They act, sometimes, in sheer devilry, it seems, knocking burdens off people's heads, breaking hoes, unhandling axes, upsetting pots of beer, and so on. Another kind of ghost, closely allied to the mazwa, is the tuyobela (sing. kayobela). They are also the ghosts of men and women who have been 'pressed' by witches and are now in their service. They have two characteristics peculiar to themselves: first, they chirp and twitter like birds -- hence the name (kuyobela, 'to twitter'), and second, they are dwarfish ... They are sent out to steal, to make people sick and to kill ... They sometimes enter into people and kosaula mala ('cut up the intestines')." (69)

"Curious stories are whispered of his [i.e., the witch's] powers, how by his wizardry he can even cause the dead to rise from their graves and to walk unassisted to his house, on reaching which they fall down mere corpses after the magnetic influence has been lifted." (70)

"Among the Anang people, north of Ndiya, a strange superstition obtains. The inhabitants are credited with going to the graves of those newly dead, and there making a sacrifice to ensure the aid of evil spirits. After this they beat upon the mound with a plantain stem -- the African tree of life -- calling, at each stroke, on the name of the corpse, till, at length, the dead man is said to arise from his grave. Then the sorcerers bind him at once, and sell him into captivity far away." (71)

"This leads us to the last of the crimes of the baloyi [i.e., witches]. Their object may not be to kill their victims but to use them as their servants, for ploughing their fields, cutting their wood, and so on." (72)

"Witches not only harm the living but also the dead. They raise the dead and enslave them. Some say that the motive of a witch in killing some one is to raise him and enslave him ... The witch can only raise the person before the body is decayed. Hence the stones and thorns put in and over the grave, and the watch set over it until the body is dust. Mavolunteer's son explained how it was done. 'The witch beats the grave with a switch, and the grave opens, and the body comes out. He drives a wooden nail into the dead man's head so that he becomes foolish, and pierces his tongue with a long bone needle, so that he cannot speak.' The raised person (isithunzela or umkhovu) takes the form which he had when he was alive. The izithunzela live in the forest, but they are summoned by witches to work for them at night, and to draw water, fetch wood, and grind grain for beer." (73)

"The most fearful of all familiars is, however, the khidudwane, a human being who has been killed by a witch to be his slave. The khidudwane is not an ordinary corpse, though witches do call corpses out of their graves in order to cut off portions of

their body for medicine, a procedure that can be prevented by magical protection of the grave. Only a person specially killed for the purpose can be a khidudwane; when they bury him, it is only the shadow that goes into the grave; the real person has been enslaved and put in a large earthen pot or in a cave. At night he hoes for his master, cuts poles for building, or goes on nefarious errands. If you meet a khidudwane, you faint at the sight, and even after medical treatment your body may feel dried up, as though it has no blood." (74)

"It is believed that the soul of a dead man may be captured before it ascends to report to God on its deeds in the body. This is a very dangerous undertaking. Those who are successful, however, may nail the soul to a tree, or else attach them to their persons in a ring. Some magicians have several of these souls held captive. They become the tools of the wizard, after having been propitiated and thus subdued, and they are sent out on evil errands by the magician." (75)

"One of a witch's most feared devices is musukule (verb, kusukula) which transforms a victim into a type of zombie (isoki, pl. masoki) which labours for the witch. A victim's relatives are unaware of the tragedy, for the witch charms a banana stem to appear as the victim. This languishes, dies and is buried, deceiving people as to the actual fate of the victim. Kaguru claim that atop the mountains there are entire zombie communities having dances, marriages, circumcision, etc. Sometimes you will hear a human-like cry in the night or you may pass a stranger on a path at dusk and he will avert his face and not greet you. Kaguru say that these are such zombies visible only to their relatives." (76)

"The ngozi is a spirit with a grudge, determined on vengeance. If a man murders another the spirit of his victim may become ngozi and cause death and illness in the family of his killer ... The ngozi is of great importance in witchcraft in that, being a malevolent spirit, it is a ready-made tool in the hands of a witch and I am told by informants that it is one of the most frequently used tools and one of the most feared." (77)

"The witch demon it is believed, can remain in the corpse of the man killed for witchcraft, after its interment, from which it sallies forth at night in any form it chooses to continue the evil work to which it was devoted when in the living flesh. They will then exhume the body and burn it in the hope of destroying the fiend residing in it." (78)

"Mitala are generally, like the wa-kishi and the living man's shadow, without substance. They are shades, spirits, souls. Restless ones, resenting wrong done to the person with whom they walked in his lifetime, they wander around and avenge themselves on those who did wrong, and on their relatives and associates. There are, however, forms of mitala that have substance. These take the form of a corpse -- the upper half only: being legless as the legs have rotted away, and only the trunk, arms and head remain. This kind of mutala, which is much dreaded, creeps about at night, pulling its legless trunk along the ground, and propelling itself with its arms, as a child when first beginning to crawl. It enters the hut of its enemy, and, as he sleeps, pulls some hairs from his forehead and then departs. A fatal sickness comes on the person attacked by the mutala." (79)

Lastly, mention should be made of those individuals who have achieved a semblance of immortality and are apparently impervious to death. Few examples exist of this rare breed but they are of sufficient interest to cite:

"While any notion of a general bodily resurrection appears very ridiculous to them, we have had vague tales told us of people who have actually returned in the flesh. They do so in virtue of some very rare and enormously powerful medicine called musamo wa lwende. Having taken it, a man warns his people not to weep after his death. They erect a platform in the veld and place the body upon it without ceremony. Three days afterwards the man is supposed to get up and set out for the east. As he comes to

to each kraal, the people, believing him to be alive, give him food. Afterwards when he has resumed his journey they hear that he was dead. He travels east until he comes to a land called Chundu, where he marries and settles down again, but if one from his former home comes and sees him alive he immediately dies in earnest. One of our most intelligent informants told us that he had seen one of these men. Another said that in his village there was once a mulozhi who on two occasions was killed outright, but not buried, and in virtue of drugs came to life and lived in the veld, where he was seen by people going to water." (80)

"Before discussing the ancestral spirits correctly so termed, it will be advisable to dispose of yisanguke. The verb sanguka means 'to return back to life' and chisanguke is neither a ghost nor a spirit, but a person who has returned from the dead to life again. This is usually found to have occurred when a man is said to have had magic which would ensure that he would return from death in the form of some animal and harass his neighbours." (81)

"But some people are born with special spiritual powers -- or magani as it is termed in Hausa. It is this that enables an Angas to turn into an animal at will, to pass through walls, to be immune to the thrust of a knife, and to become invisible to his foes ... The Berom say that they have men who when cut to pieces in war, could come together again ..." (82)

"When witches steal the kla [i.e., soul] of an unborn child it is born dead. When people live to be abnormally old they have probably by witchcraft stolen and eaten the kla or part of the kla of somebody else and added it to their own, prolonging their lives. Thus ten years of another man's life may be taken away and added to one's own by taking a part of his kla." (83)

"Sometimes when a man dies and is buried, he rises again (instead of becoming a decomposing corpse and a wandering mufu (spirit); that is to say, on his resurrection he becomes another human being, complete with chimvule (shadow). Sometimes one knows that a man who has, apparently, died is wusangu ('immortal,' as a rough rendering). One knows this, because before he 'dies' he confides this secret to his wife. After the seeming death she tells the villagers, and to save the poor man trouble he is not buried, but is laid out -- above ground -- in a jitu (grove of swamp timber), whence he can rise again, and start on his new existence without trouble. One may bury one who is wusangu owing to ignorance of the fact; in such case he will rise from the grave. The man who is wusangu had more trouble if he were killed in battle in the old days, for then his head would be cut off. Being immortal he would awake, but headless, and in this condition would stagger about blindly, until his headless shoulders knocked against a tree or other obstacle, when a new head would grow thereon, and he would be suitably equipped for starting on his new career. During his periodical existence on earth the man who is wusangu is like any other individual, having nothing to differentiate him from his companions. Presumably, as he knows he is wusangu, he has some knowledge of his previous existences; but I have had no opportunity of meeting one, and of hearing from his lips 'the finest story in the world'; nor am I likely to do so, as such people keep the secret of their nature closely guarded, till on the point of reincarnation. It is, however, not considered at all rare." (84)

As is obvious from the above cited examples, the African belief in witches and related beings shares many elements in common with the traditional vampire of European folklore. Of greater relevance than the blood drinking is the shared belief that certain persons can defy death and exert a malignant influence from the grave, their powers seemingly unimpaired by such a "minor" matter as the cessation of life. That such individuals were commonly criminals or witches in their prior existence is a basic component of both African and European belief. No rapacious counts or countesses here. Even more remarkable is the shared practice of exhuming the bodies of those suspected of

of vampirism and witchcraft, a distinctive feature which is seldom encountered elsewhere in the world. The same physical signs are sought for in both cultures, the presence of blood, swelling and incorrupcion. Even the minute holes in the topsoil that are believed to allow the vampire to leave and enter its gravesite in a dematerialized state are also found in accounts concerning deceased witches in Africa. According to Talbot: "It will be noticed that in all such cases one or more holes are reported to be found in the soil above the grave." (85) The same drastic measures are taken by both native and peasant alike to quell any malevolency thought to be harbored by a suspect corpse, cremation and decapitation being the preferred methods. Indeed, the African witch has more features in common with the popular concept of the vampire than does the traditional vampire itself. Blood-drinking is more frequently encountered in African witchcraft than European vampirism. The bat, a creature of only incidental importance to the vampire legend, plays a much larger role in African witchcraft. Not only does the African witch commonly maintain this animal as her familiar, she is also believed to be capable of transforming herself into its likeness. This close association with the bat might account for the fact that in some tribal societies witches are said to sleep suspended upside down and make twittering noises. The African witch is said to exert a hypnotic influence over her victims a characteristic, Bela Lugosi notwithstanding, that is almost wholly lacking in accounts of European vampirism. (86) The use of water as a prophylactic barrier is another feature more common to African witchcraft than European vampirism, as condemned witches were sometimes drowned and/or their remains were immersed in water to prevent the possibility of resurrection. (87)

These similarities are so remarkable that one is inclined to suggest the possibility that the belief in both witchcraft and vampirism first arose in Africa, now considered the cradle of mankind, and diffused northward into Europe and elsewhere. (88) According to Frank H. Melland, in his In Witch-Bound Africa: "There is nothing inherently impossible in the idea that one race and one religion existed in Europe and Africa at some prehistoric date." (89) With the advent of Christianity in Europe these millenia-old beliefs were transformed into a form of diabolism and lost much of their intrinsic African nature. It was only in those remote areas of Central and Eastern Europe, where the influence of Christianity had little or no influence, that these beliefs were retained with many of their original characteristics intact. (90)

Even granting the possibility that Africa witnessed the geographical genesis of both witchcraft and vampirism, from whence did these beliefs ultimately derive their source of origin? Perhaps, as suggested in the previous Journal, certain paranormal phenomena, as little understood today as then, were contributing factors, yet I personally doubt they played a significant role. I am, however, in total agreement with Talbot when he writes: "How much truth there is in the idea of harm being done to others through the power of thought and will, and, perhaps by actions in the astral world, is a matter of conjecture; there is, however, unfortunatly no doubt that the chief cause of this extraordinary belief in, and fear of, witchcraft is due to sheer ignorance as to the aetiology of disease ..." (91) Given the prevalence of intestinal parasites, malaria, sleeping sickness, sickle cell anemia, etc., in Africa in the remote past (and the present day) among tribal societies that considered most forms of death as unnatural and one need look no further than this for those motivating factors.

Nonetheless, there is much that remains seemingly inexplicable in many African accounts concerning vampirism and witchcraft. Such practices will be further explored in the next issue of the Journal.

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5. Field, op. cit., p. 145.
6. Debrunner, op. cit., p. 54.
7. I have misplaced this reference.
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11. Melland, Frank H., In Witch-Bound Africa, London, Frank Cass, 1967, p. 210.
12. Fisher, W. Singleton, "Black Magic Feuds," African Studies, vol. 8, no. 1, March 1949, p.
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15. Ibid., p. 230.
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17. MacKenzie, D.R., The Spirit-Ridden Konde, Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott, 1925, pp. 255-256.
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27. LeVine, Robert A., "Witchcraft and Sorcery in a Gusii Community," ibid., 226.
28. Tremearne, A.J.N., Hausa Superstitions and Customs, London, John Bale. Sons & Danielsson, 1913, p. 154.
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30. Field, op. cit., pp. 142-143.
31. Gelfand, Michael, The African Witch, Edinburgh, E. & S. Livingstone, 1967, p. 28.
32. Claridge, G. Cyril, Wild Bush Tribes of Tropical Africa, London, Seeley, Service & Co., 1922, p. 179.
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36. Talbot, op. cit., p. 210. (The Peoples of Southern Nigeria)
37. Ibid., p. 217.
38. Meek, C.K., Tribal Studies in Northern Nigeria, London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1931, vol. 1, p. 435.
39. Ibid., p. 496.
40. Meek, C.K., The Northern Tribes of Nigeria, London, Frank Cass, 1971, vol. 2, p. 113.
41. MacKenzie, op. cit., p. 261.
42. Talbot, op. cit., p. 207. (The Peoples of Southern Nigeria)
43. Ibid., p. 219.
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45. Ibid., p. 223.

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47. Wilson, Monica, Good Company, Boston, Beacon Press, 1963, p. 92.
48. Pritchard, E.E., Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1937, p. 42.
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50. Beidelman, op.cit., p. 68.
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54. Santandrea, S., "Evil and Witchcraft Among the Ndogo Group of Tribes," Africa, vol. 11, no. 4, Oct. 1938, p. 464.
55. Kingsley, Mary H., Travels in West Africa, London, Macmillan, 1897, p. 467. One further example might be cited: "In former days it was the general custom, which is now only observed by pagan Mende, to cut the spleen out immediately after death. It is put into a basin of water. If it sinks it is bad. There is witchcraft in it (hone). If it floats -- Kohu gole mia, it is clean belly, that is, all is well." (Frederick William Hugh Migeod, A View of Sierra Leone, London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1926, p. 219.
56. Meek, op.cit., p. 56. (The Northern Tribes of Nigeria)
57. Melland, op.cit., p. 228.
58. Claridge, op.cit., p. 174.
59. Reynolds, Barrie, Magic, Divination and Witchcraft Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1963, p. 126.
60. Talbot, P. Amaury, Life in Southern Nigeria, London, Macmillan, 1923, p. 131.
61. Practically all the examples cited by Montague Summers, in his The Vampire: His Kith and Kin (NY, E.P. Dutton, 1929, pp. 9-13), are of African ancestor worship and have little relevance to the vampire legend. Why Summers overlooked the works of Melland, Nassau and Talbot, of which all were published prior to Summers' book and contain references to the African vampire, is beyond me. This certainly seems to belie the image of Summers as being an "indefatigable" researcher.
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75. Parrinder, op.cit., p. 166.
76. Beidelman, op.cit., p. 76.
77. Crawford, J.R., Witchcraft and Sorcery in Rhodesia, London, Oxford University Press, 1967, pp. 88-89.
78. Claridge, op.cit., p. 179.
79. Melland, op.cit., p. 145.
80. Smith and Dale, op.cit., p. 103.

81. White, C.M.N., "Notes on Some Metaphysical Concepts of the Balovale Tribes," African Studies, vol. 7, no. 4, Dec. 1948, pp. 147-148.
82. Meek, op.cit., p. 35. (The Northern Tribes of Nigeria)
83. Field, op.cit., p. 93.
84. Melland, op.cit., pp. 151-152.
85. Talbot, op.cit., p. 208. (The Peoples of Southern Nigeria)
86. "They are able to hypnotize their victims and through that they are able to achieve their aims easily without being found out by other people who are not bewitched." (C.L. Rapp, "Lelemi," Africa, vol. 8, no. 4, Oct. 1935, p. 555)
87. "When sufficient time has elapsed to allow of the complete burning of the body, the the young men carefully collect the ashes and bury them in a marsh, the water be- an effective charm against the machinations of the chyen [i.e., spirit]." Coryndon, op.cit., p. 241. Unlike European vampirism, I have uncovered only one reference to the use of wooden stakes to dispatch an evil spirit: "A person killed by lightning is buried at the cross roads, as he (or she) is supposed to have been slain by the nzaji fetish, who controls the lightning. In fact all those persons who are killed in one way or another by this fetish are treated in the same way, e.g. a man who bleeds from the mouth and nose (probably due to the bursting of a bloodvessel) is said to be killed by the nzaji fetish, and his corpse is put into a grave by the road- side, and two stakes are driven into him -- one through the chest, and the other through the stomach." (John H. Weeks, Among the Primitive Bakongo, London, Seeley, Service & Co., 1914, p. 274.) One further reference might be cited within this con- text: "I am told that the driving of a nail into the head of a witch is still prac- tised nowadays. When a person dies three or four people are chosen to watch his grave [to prevent desecration by witches]. Usually witches come in a group. It is best, therefore, not to rush out when one is seen at the grave, but to wait until the others have congregated. Then they hear the leader of the witches, who has killed the deceased, saying to the others, 'I am the person who killed the dead man, and I want you to help me take the body out of the grave and then each of you can cut any piece of flesh you want.' At this moment all the guards throw stones at the witches who become frightened when they realize that they are being watched. The witches exclaim, 'who is there? 'who is there?' But the watches must remain silent for they themselves can become bewitched merely through answering a witch. Failing to elicit an answer the witches panic and try to escape, but the four men fall upon them, making sure of the leader first. They grab and beat her until she falls to the ground unconscious. A wooden nail or a sharp peg made from the branch of the mutarara tree is hammered into her temple with a stone. She is left there to die but does not die on the spot. Her witch spirit enables her to rise and run away to her hut where she calls her children and tells them that she is very ill. They gather and she declares that she developed a severe headache on her way to a ceremony. The news of her illness spreads to other villages, including the one in which the man died. Not long afterwards the witch dies and those who come to wash the body see the nail in her head and realize that she was a witch." (Mich- ael Gelfand, Shona Ritual, Cape Town, Juta & Co., 1959, pp. 166-167.)
88. Devendra P. Varma, in his preface to Varney the Vampire (NY, Arno Press, 1970, pp. xii-xxx), suggests an Asian origin for the vampire legend.
89. Melland, op.cit., p. 185. This attitude is also shared by Pennethorne Hughes in his book entitled Witchcraft (London, Longmans, Green, 1952). I disagree, however, with his contention that these beliefs first arose in ancient Egypt, as I do with Melland and Talbot's suggstion that the same may have originated with the pygmies.
90. It might be argued that Greece, an area where the belief in vampires has flourished, can hardly be termed remote or pagan, considering its impact on Western Civilization. This represents no contradiction, however, as there is strong evidence to indicate that the belief in vampires was adopted by the Greeks from their northern neigh- bors long after their country had ceased to be a power in the Mediterranean.
91. Talbot, op.cit., pp. 206-207. (The Peoples of Southern Nigeria)