

WITCHCRAFT IN AFRICA: A BIPARTITE PHENOMENON

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ABSTRACT

Even though witchcraft may not be scientifically justified, it is a widely believed reality in Africa and among Africans. In Nigerian dialectical parlance for example, witchcraft is recognized and called *Aje* among the Yoruba, *Ifot* among the Ibibio, *Amusus* among the Igbo, and *Pou* among the Ijaw. Hence, every average African within Africa, most especially, acknowledges the existence and actuality of witchcraft. However despite this acknowledgement, some lack the knowledge of the fact that witchcraft is a two-way street-a help and a hurt in Africa. Consequently, this study employs secondary data to unveil the havoc the phenomenon has caused in various African societies as well as the good it has brought to few Africans. But before justice would be done to this, the study would have to first consider the meaning of witchcraft and witches, evidences of witchcraft in the holy Bible, and accusations of witchcraft against children.

KEYWORDS: Witchcraft, Africa, Positive Impacts, Negative Impacts.

INTRODUCTION

Both lettered and unlettered men on earth know that there is existence of two major worlds-the physical and the metaphysical worlds. The physical world is where every human and animal live, reproduce, work and eat. Every inhabitant of the physical world sees each other, touches each other, interact and relate with each other because of their tangible and concrete nature. Contrariwise, it is believed that the metaphysical or the preternatural world has supernatural beings and spirits as its inhabitants. The inhabitants of this preternatural world are beyond the view and grasp of many of the physical world's beings.

It is also believed, particularly among Africans, that the metaphysical world and its inhabitants (which include various gods and deities) influence and control the physical world. Thus, witches and

wizards seek and derive their power of operation from the entities of the unseen world. But, science counters the above claim. According to Bond and Diane (2001:6), while [beliefs] in witchcraft are real, witchcraft itself is nonexistent. They put it this way: "Witchcraft beliefs are real; there are no witches, only the belief in them"¹.

Still on the negation of the existence of witchcraft by science, Samuel Lumwe (2017:2) narrated a story of how many people concluded that his relative was bewitched to death, which unknown to them, the cause of the death was HIV/AIDS. Lumwe's story goes thus: "I still remember very well when one of my relatives contracted the HIV virus (allegedly transmitted from her husband) that led to her death. However, even after the death of her husband from the same disease,

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which could be viewed as a proof of the virus, some still said that the cause of her death was because she was bewitched. To make matters worse, when she was ailing, I learned that she was taken to a witchdoctor for some traditional treatment by another close relative. I had to intervene and took her to the hospital for diagnosis only for it to be confirmed that she was suffering from HIV/AIDS".²

Based on Lumwe's story and Bond's and Diane's postulation, we can say that science has no business with witchcraft. It even faults what many tag as witchcraft or bewitchment. Nonetheless, witchcraft is a reality in all ambits of life in Africa. In fact, Africans (including Christians, Muslims and traditionalists) hold firmly their belief in the existence of witchcraft, witches/wizards, and this we shall explore in the later part of this study.

DENOTATION AND MEANING OF WITCHCRAFT

The definition or meaning of witchcraft varies from community to community, from country to country and from continent to continent. However in whichever way it is viewed by peoples and scholars from different communities, countries and continents, emphasis would still be made to its connection to the use of magic and paranormal or supernatural powers to achieve a particular end. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, witchcraft means "the use of magic powers, especially evil ones".³

For Middleton and Winter (1970:xv), witchcraft presupposes a "mystical and innate power which can be used by its possessor to harm other people".⁴ This duo's view on the phenomenon is of course incomplete. This is because it sees it as a weapon for carrying out evil and wickedness alone. Just like Middleton and Winter defined it, Akrong (2007:53) points out that "witchcraft is often associated with supernatural activities that are believed to bring about negative or evil

consequences for individuals and families". As if recognizing the error in and/ or the incompleteness of his definition, Akrong added quickly, "there is an equally strong view about witchcraft that defines it in terms of a benign supernatural power".⁵

From his own viewpoint, Asare Opoku "flawlessly" defined witchcraft as "the exercise or employment of esoteric power for a definite purpose, good or evil"⁶. Joe Carter (2018) in his articles captioned "9 Things you should know about Wicca and Modern Witchcraft" notes that witchcraft refers to the following: "worldview", "religion" and "practices" which are associated with the use of rituals that are believed to harness and focus cosmic or psychic energies to bring about some desired change.⁷

Witchcraft in essence has to do with man's usage of extraordinary power, arising from his connectivity to the unseen world, to bring about breathtaking, enigmatic change in his environment. Witchcraft involves secrecy and concealment. It has existed for myriads of year; it still exists. It is in some way analogous to black magic, sorcery, necromancy and voodooism.

WHO IS A WITCH/WIZARD?

Literally, a witch/wizard is a woman or man perceived by people to possess magical or diabolical powers used for the purpose of causing the society and its people pain and misery. Robert Priest (2012) stated that a witch is a "sorcerer/sorceress". Among witches, Priest notes, there are the ones who sometimes unconsciously cause misfortunes and deaths through the use of socially disapproved occult/supernatural power, while there are others who consciously do the same. However, Priest note further, by citing Evans-Pritchard, that there is a slight distinction between a witch and a sorcerer. The difference is that the powers with which a witch orchestrates evil are psychic and innate while sorcerer/sorceress makes use of

acquired and learned magical techniques for the same utmost end of harming others.⁸

A witch is also viewed by many as an old and senile woman, often looking haggard, who mar people's life and destiny through the utilization of mysterious, ungodly power, and derives joy in doing so. According to Van Wyk, "witches are mainly older women who harm people for no good reason, without being aware of what they are doing".⁹ The unawareness being emphasized here by Wyk centers on manipulation. It has been argued that witches are beings who are manipulated by forces greater than them. However despite being under "manipulation", most witches feel elated in executing evil.

Further, there is one popular belief among certain persons that the activities of witches are targeted at humans alone. When people die mysteriously, especially in an environment known to be dominated by witches, they tag such death as one orchestrated by witches whereas when an animal in the same locality die, no one would see such as witch-perpetrated one. Nonetheless, this belief is mendacious, because the activities of witches can be against man or against animals. In history, animals have been victims of witchcraft. For example, in the New World (Virginia precisely) a woman by name Grace Sherwood was accused in 1706 by her neighbours of killing their pigs and even hexing their cotton. Based on the accusation she was sued and later convicted of being a witch by the court, which led to her eight years imprisonment.¹⁰

Beyond what is stated above, witches are also viewed as hooligan, reprobates, villains, miscreants and persons of anti-social behaviour. In the African continent, anyone who works against the progress of his community or society is liken to or regarded as a witch. In support of this, Van Wyk exclaimed and ululated with his pen, writing, "The ordinary man and woman in a village could suddenly become a witch and a sorcerer... Some people are called 'witches'

because they cause destruction. The destruction they cause is the inversion of the *normal*, well-balanced life (the traditional accepted life). In Africa the anti-social behaviour of normal people is regarded as 'witchcraft'. In addition, Wyk stated seven kinds of people with anomalous, anti-social behaviours that could be tagged "witches". They are:

- i. People who contravene accepted norms and destroy the basic values of society, such as rejecting respect for seniors;
- ii. People who destroy harmony in society by destructing the normal and the good in society, such as having intercourse with animals (bestiality) or with the same sex (homosexuality);
- iii. People who harm others close to them, such as family members-especially children;
- iv. People who are guilty of incest, or who have incestuous dreams;
- v. People whose actions are characterized by secrecy and loathsome behaviour;
- vi. People who eat human flesh-especially that of children; and
- vii. People who upset the balance of nature.¹¹

WITCHCRAFT AND THE BIBLE

It is far from mendacity that witchcraft dates back to time immemorial. As a matter of fact, its biblical evidences abound.

As it is in Africa before and now so it was in Israel. The Israelites believed the reality of witchcraft. In addition to the belief in witchcraft's reality or existence, some Israelites even practiced it in a way similar to how it is being practiced in Africa. But their God being a cantankerous and petulant one and also a scorner of witchcraft, warned them seriously and repeatedly against it in the following biblical passages:

"Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God". Leviticus 19:31

"You shall not eat any flesh with the blood in it. You shall not practise augury or witchcraft". Leviticus 19:26

"There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practises divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord; and because of these abominable practices the Lord your God is driving them out before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God". Deuteronomy 18:10-13

"If a person turns to mediums and wizards, playing the harlot after them; I will set my face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". Leviticus 20:6

As though the above were not enough, their God-the God of Israel spelt out, without equivocation, death as penalty for witchcraft. He told the Israelites:

"You shall not permit a sorceress to live". Exodus 22:18

"A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned with stones, their blood shall be upon them". Leviticus 20:27

Considering all these verses, Saul, after he was crowned the king of Israel, quarantined and ostracized all the witches, wizards and diviners in the kingdom of Israel. However as he was faced with difficulty which was in the form of the overwhelming number of the Philistine artilleries whom he was about waging war with, he turned back and ate his vomit. He said to his manservant, "Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her".

As soon as his manservant sought for a medium and found one, he gave Saul a reply of which after that Saul set out for Endor-the city where

the witch resided. And as he got there he said, according to the Bible, "Divine for me by a spirit, and bring up for me whomever I shall name for you" (I Samuel 28:1-25).

But heartbreakingly, the spirit of the dead whom the witch invoked, predicted Saul's death. And in I Chronicle 10:13 the Bible revealed the fulfillment of the prediction of Saul's death and its cause, which was witchcraft. In the said scripture, Bible notes:

"So Saul died for his unfaithfulness; he was unfaithful to the Lord in that he did not keep the command of the Lord, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance".¹²

In essence, Bible acknowledges the existence and reality of witchcraft. It also concedes to the fact that witches make use of unearthly/beyond-human powers to operate, as it was in the case of King Saul and the witch. Aside from this, the New Testament of the same Bible acknowledges the practice of witchcraft in the following passages: Galatians 5:19-20; Acts 19:17-20; Acts 8:9-13; and Revelation 21:8. Thus, "to doubt the existence of witches and their activities", as Kisilu Kombo noted, "Was to deny the very existence of God".¹³

AFRICAN VIEWS ON WITCHCRAFT

The palpability of witchcraft in Africa is undeniable. It is hard and unthinkable to see or point at any African who refutes the reality of witchcraft, because Africa itself is characterized with idol worship, rituals, rites, offering of sacrifices to this and that god/deity, masquerade practices, etc. There is no community or village in the entirety of Africa that is and/or was devoid of sorcery and magical pursuit. According to Van Wyk, "belief in mystical powers prevails in every African village and township". In addition, "many stories are told to prove the existence of all kinds of power and forces in the universe"¹⁴ of which Africa is part of.

In Africa also, nothing happens by chance. This is because "what we call chance" is "yet traceable to a cause and a reason" despite the fact that it is what happens accidentally. "For the Africans, the concept of causality is a very central issue. The African life is permeated by the understanding that nothing happens without a cause".¹⁵ In support of this, Manala (2004:1498) notes:

"Nothing just happens. There is always a cause, and usually a witch or sorcerer is believed to be the one causing the problem".¹⁶

Based on the above, many in different African communities tend to point at witches as being the cause of their "misfortune, barrenness, accidents, snakebites, brake failure, sickness, untimely death, and almost every kind of problem". Thus according to Akrong (2007:59-60), "It is not uncommon to hear people" in Africa "exclaim in dismay in the face of problems: 'Who is doing this to me?' rather than 'What is causing these things?'"¹⁷ So, Africans believed in causality and therefore see witchcraft as a major cause of evil befalling either a person (and his property), or a community.

Witchcraft is also viewed by Africans as an endeavor or an enterprise for maximization of power through diabolical means. It is no lie that witches possess astronomical or colossal, terrifying power. And people who want and seek this kind of power do so in order to be feared among their people. However to get this power is very costly. To Kisilu Kombo (2003) witches (and people desiring to be one) get their powers by "eschewing other people's company and behaving in odd ways like running around naked at night". Also Kombo added that this is prevalent among the Luhya people of Kenya.¹⁸

In the contemporary time, witchcraft has witnessed some metamorphoses or changes in Africa. It is today an avenue for quick, evil wealth. Some Africans nowadays do diabolical and evil things for wealth. They kill (both human and

animals), sleep with animals and same-sex, bed with demented, steal people's undies for sacrifices, kill and steal fetuses while they are still in the womb with their mothers' knowledge, etc. in their quest for wealth. And in concurrence with the above, Aleksandra Crimpic (2010:9-10) writes:

"Certain writes highlight the 'modern' aspect of contemporary witchcraft as being a reaction to capitalism and emerging globalization. Others refer to the importance of the relation between witchcraft and power, in particular the accumulation of power and wealth by often unquestionable means. Witchcraft has... taken on 'new form', as in the example of 'wealth witchcraft'.¹⁹

ACCUSATIONS OF WITCHCRAFT AGAINST CHILDREN

Some children in different parts of Africa have been and are still being accused of witchcraft. According to findings of UNICEF, children accused of witchcraft are often pre-adolescent or adolescent, and Nigeria, Angola and Democratic Republic of Congo happen to be countries with high rate of accusations of witchcraft against young ones.

According to Patrice Yengo (2008:299) the phenomenon of children suspected or accused of witchcraft is not a novel development in Africa. He noted that the accusation used to be against newborns in the past, but older ones in the present.

The accusations as a matter of fact have made many children homeless. UNICEF for example points out that thousands of children have been deliberately thrown out to the street because of the issue of witch accusation. In the streets of Kinshasa and Lubumbashi in the D.R. Congo for example, UNICEF notes that myriads of children suffer this fate of homelessness because they were suspected of having something to do with

witchcraft. In the streets of Mbanza Kongo (the Capital of Zaire Province), in Uige and Luanda in northern Angola, in Akwa Ibom State in South-

South Nigeria and so forth, the same is the fate of thousands of young ones.



Figure 1. Pictures of when Loven picked the little "witch" Hope in one of the streets of Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State, One year later after Loven took the "witch boy"

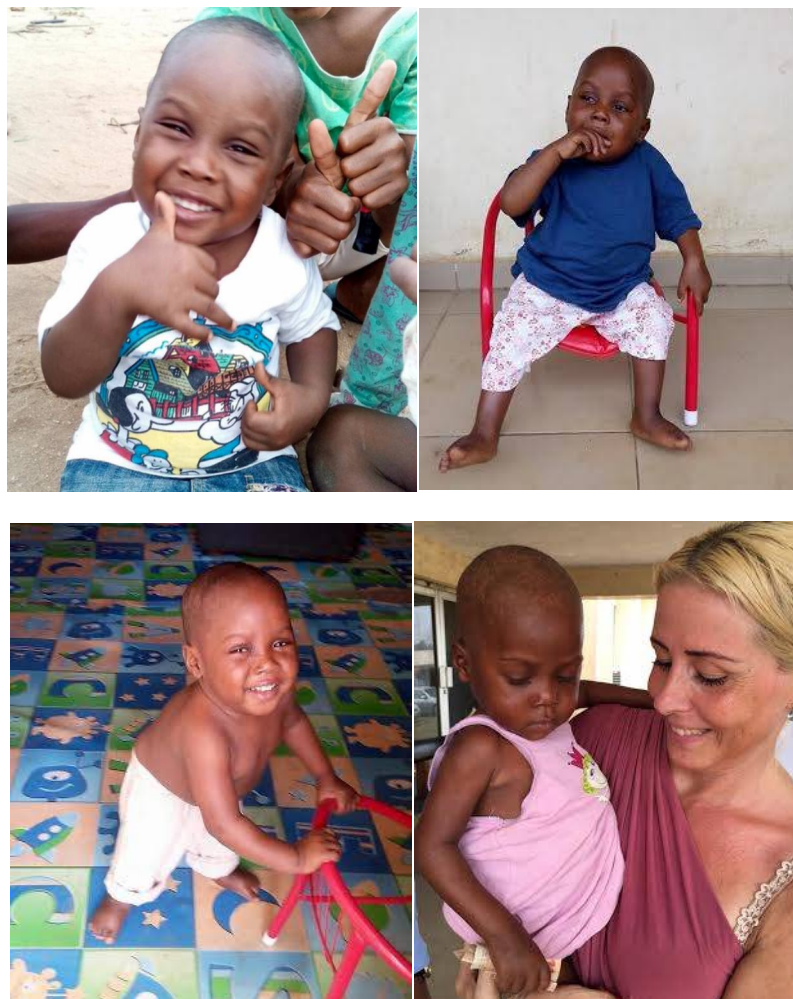


Figure 2. Photo sources: "One Year Later, Nigerian 'Witch Boy' Healthy, Heading to School" Cbsnews.com, 2017; and "2-Year-Old 'Witch Child' Who was left to Die Makes Stunning Recovery" Boredpanda)

As Yengo observed, the accusation of witchcraft against little ones in several African communities is indeed not of recency or recent development. In Chinua Achebe's ageless, unique novel titled *Things Fall Apart*, a picture of this was clearly painted. In the novel, the stellar author narrated how Ezinma, Okonkwo's daughter was accused of being an *ogbanje* who was seen as being responsible for her mother-Ekwefi's misery in life. To prove how serious Africans take this issue of *ogbanje*, which is part of witchcraft, Achebe noted that Okonkwo went as far as inviting a witchdoctor to handle the case.²⁰

In addition to this, a Danish aid worker and founder of African Children's Aid, Education and Development Foundation, Anja Ringgren Loven in early 2016 ran into a 2-year-old boy in Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria who was accused of witchcraft and thus was abandoned to die by his own family. Speaking concerning the little boy, Loven said the boy, whom she calls Hope, had been living on the streets and survived on scraps from passersby. But as soon as she saw him, she took him to hospital where it was discovered that he was riddled with worms and had to have daily blood transfusions to be revived. Again, Loven wrote on her Facebook page, concerning children accusations of witchcraft: "Thousands of children are being accused of being witches and we've both seen torture of children, dead children and frightened children".²¹

Finally, UNICEF, after several studies and survey, came up with five profiles of children who are at particular risk of accusations of witchcraft. They are:

- Children having lost both parents, sent to live with another relative. Sometimes the child is sent to a host family according to rules of kinship (matrilineal or patrilineal).
- Children having lost one parent, the other having remarried. Disagreements with the step-father or mother may be the origin of an accusation.
- Children living with a physical disability (any physical abnormality: large head, swollen belly, red eyes, etc.), those with a physical illness (epilepsy, tuberculosis, etc.) or psychological disorder (autism or Down Syndrome, etc., even those who stutter) or especially gifted children.
- Children showing any unusual behaviour, for example children who are stubborn, aggressive, thoughtful, withdrawn or lazy. In short, all kinds of behaviour that, in a specific context defined by witchcraft discourse, appear as unusual or abnormal.
- "Bad birth" children may also be open to witchcraft accusation, but constitute a separate category.²²

WITCHCRAFT AS A BIPARTITE PHENOMENON

Many people tend to see witchcraft as a negative thing that always produce no good in Africa. But the truth is that witchcraft produces two broad results in every African community, and this makes it a double-barreled phenomenon. It has over the years produced pleasant and unpleasant results for many communities within the confines of Africa. At this juncture therefore, we shall be unveiling those results.

NEGATIVE FRUITS OF WITCHCRAFT IN AFRICA

The first sordid and abysmal fruit witchcraft bears in African communities is death, untimely death. Countless number of people have died before their "real time" in different African communities as a result of witchcraft. This is because Africans believe firmly that bewitchment can lead to an early grave. In short, any enchantment against a person or a family has the potency of taking the person's/family's life if the enchantment is not properly nullified through the process of disenchantment. Agreeing to death as one of the dangers/results of witchcraft in African society, Kisilu Kombo writes:

"The practice of witchcraft poses dangers in the society as it causes deaths of innocent people. This denies society the potential contribution that members who are so killed could have made to society. This action creates widows, widowers and orphans as people lose their partners and offspring due to this malicious practice".²³

Aside from death, witchcraft engenders hyper fear, confusion and enmity in a community where it is prevalent. Brothers can even hold acrimony against each other because of witchcraft and likewise husband against wife, daughter against mother, son against father, niece against uncle and vice versa. Without being equivocal, Samuel Lumwe (2017) narrated a story of how he lost his father-in-law in the year 2007. He noted that the father-in-law fell from the roof of a house he was repairing and as such broke his neck and died. But as they were going for the man's funeral service at home, something that created bitterness and animosity between two blood brothers of the dead man occurred. That was, the younger one asked "Now that dad is dead, who will be next?" Immediately he finished asking this question he replied himself, pointing at the elder one, saying, "You will be the next, so prepare".

Upon hearing that, Lumwe noted, the elder one became very annoyed with the younger one, and fight later broke out between them. The elder one also after this incident began to expose the younger one as the person that killed their father, with the claim that his younger brother has been involved in a ritual of eating human flesh that was offered as a rain sacrifice and that he is one of the members of a witch club in their locality which requires every of its member to offer a relative as a sacrifice. The elder one also made it clear that the younger one offered their dad to the club, "but because he (the father) was very old they did not take his meat because it very tough so they were now demanding another person".²⁴ In essence, this was how witchcraft instigated fear and animus between two brothers that ought to live as one.

Furthermore, witchcraft brings sickness and diseases upon a community and its people. For the purpose of emphasis, the kind of sickness or ailment that witchcraft causes is the one that usually defy medicament. In the establishment where I did my Industrial Training (IT) for example, a co worker and a *friend* of mine there got poisoned by another co worker about two months after my admission into the steel firm. When he was taken to hospital by his family to ascertain the name, type and cause of the ailment, all lab results showed nothing yet his sickness grew worse with the passing and dawning of each day. Considering the sickness and diseases as one of the negative fruits of witchcraft, Bauer notes:

"Witches are believed to cause serious diseases like stroke, tuberculosis, AIDS, and many other illnesses by 'pointing a finger at their victims, through food poisoning, [and] by mixing some magical potions with the soil on which their victims footprints are made to inflict pain on them".²⁵

In addition, witchcraft truncates destinies. It is widely believed among Africans that witches have the power to destroy people's lives and future, and even manipulate and cause them to be derailed from the original plan and purpose of God concerning their lives. In Ghana for example, Akrong (2007:59) notes that there is "belief that witches can tamper with one's destiny, given at birth by God". And when this happens, it brings "about confusion in the life of an individual, usually expressed in acute immoral acts and social disorientation".²⁶ In churches also, Pastors and Christians pray against this because they know, or rather believe, that witchcraft can bring about truncation or exchange of destiny.

More so, misfortune and/or ill luck can be a product of witchcraft. Africans believe that a person might fall into a pit prepared for another simply because some forces greater than him are working against him. There are people who when

they enter where every other person entered and was favoured, they would come out of the same place disfavoured and rejected because they have been bewitched with or without their knowledge. In respect to this, Achola (2005:12) writes:

"It is believed that every misfortune is caused by humans or spirits. There might be exceptions when it comes to global catastrophes, but personal or family problems are always caused by someone. If the individual or the clan can't find personal faults that would justify a correction from the ancestors, witchcraft or magic are suspected. The offender is someone known because these powers don't function anonymously. There has to be contact between the witch and the victim".²⁷

Finally, witchcraft is today a weapon for great evil in the hands of political *gladiators*. Politicians engage in fierce spiritual combat against one another through witchcraft or by engaging the services of witches. According to an example given by Dirk Kohnert (1996:11), many politicians were apprehended and even executed in Togo for allegedly using witchcraft against President Eyadéma. Kohnert writes:

"During the Togolese National Conference of August 1991, for example, the National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) exposed a number of cases of political opponents of Eyadéma-Regime which were imprisoned, tortured, and executed because of alleged 'witchcraft' against the Head of State".²⁸

POSITIVE FRUITS OF WITCHCRAFT IN AFRICA

In African communities, witchcraft has delivered certain positive results. First among them is healing and deliverance from mysterious diseases and sicknesses. People who specialize in this area are called "witchdoctors". In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, it was a witchdoctor that Okonkwo invited to deliver his daughter-Ezinma from *Ogbanje*

spirit. Witchdoctors are therefore persons of vast knowledge in spiritual matters, who communicate with the entities of the preternatural world and use enigmatic powers to save rather destroy. Trying to describe witchdoctors, Robert Priest (2012) writes:

"In societies that attribute misfortune and death to human parties identified as witches or sorcerers, there is often also another category of magico-religious practitioner who acts with social approval to combat the witch or sorcerer/sorceress. Indigenous terms for this other category of magico-religious practitioner have often been translated into English as 'traditional healer', 'witchdoctor', 'diviner', 'shaman', or 'medicine man'. In most societies historically that had both 'witch' (*mchawi*) and 'witchdoctor' (*mganga*), anti-social ends-towards the harm of others, and the 'witchdoctor' or 'shaman' as acting towards pro-social ends-towards healing of others. And, prior to the presence of Christianity, in most societies both the evil 'witch' and the good 'witchdoctor' were thought of as drawing from the same source(s) of power-which were neither intrinsically evil nor intrinsically good".²⁹

In Africa, there are several examples in this contemporary time that prove that some lives have been preserved through witchcraft. The friend of mine I was narrating his story in one or two pages before is an example of this. After the fruitless effort to heal him by medical practitioners, a witchdoctor was invited, who revealed the name, type and cause of the poison as well as the name of the poisoner who happened to be a co worker also in the same establishment. Also, he was healed within the space of six weeks. In the Republic of Benin, the life of yet another person by name Nicéphore Soglo, one of the former directors of World Bank in Paris, was saved through witchcraft. According to Kohnert, Soglo contested for the post of president in Benin in 1991. But at the end of his campaign, Soglo fell seriously ill and thus was flown out for treatment at the military hospital

Val-de-Grace in Paris. The illness according to Kohnert was believed by almost every Beninese to be an act of "bewitchment" by his popular political adversary, Mathieu Kérékou. However with the employment and intervention of a powerful *vodounon* whose power was very great, Soglo was resuscitated and after which he began to recuperate.³⁰

Beyond what is already stated, witchcraft facilitates protection of life. Before and now in Africa, people inject, ingest and swallow charms. They also wear amulets, talismans and charms around their neck, ankles, genitals and waist for protection from known and unknown, and seen and unseen evil. And one important thing to note is that the amulets, talismans and charms are prepared through witchcraft and by witchdoctors. On the basis of the above, Bauer detailedly writes:

"One of the African worldview assumptions that allow Christians to continue to seek the help of diviners and witchdoctors is the view that witchcraft powers can be used for good in society. This view suggests the possibility that positive mystical powers can continue to be helpful in protecting those who have supposedly made a total commitment to Jesus Christ.

The belief causes some Christians to continue to wear charms and amulets, take medicine, or have the prescribed concoction rubbed into their bodies... Some also continue to keep dry bones, snakes, and birds on the rooftops of their houses, or place marks on private parts of their bodies. Such dual allegiance among Christians is grounded in African religious thought that regards the metaphysical world as 'a moral spiritual forces, traditionally, were seen as intrinsically neither good nor bad, although their power could be channeled for moral or immoral purposes'.³¹

Lastly, witchcraft in some cases brings about crime reduction in the society. It is a truth is that

people fear devil more than God. If something is stolen in a community for example and one brings out the Holy Bible or the Holy Koran for an oath taking, the culprit will hardly be fished out but when one deity is engaged, the culprit will without hesitation fish him/herself out without waiting for the deity to do that itself. Thus, Kombo avers:

"...ordinary people do not want to attract the attention of witches by going out of the ordinary. Areas where witchcraft beliefs and practices are common do not experience high rate of crimes and immorality. Incidentally, some people including normal Christians argue that without witches, their social world would lack a social control mechanism... And since all people are believed to have access to witches, people do not underestimate the ability of their neighbours to revenge in case of social, political and economic misdeeds".³²

CONCLUSION

Beyond every obscurity and opacity, witchcraft is, based on the evidences presented in this paper, a reality, and a help and at the same time a hurt-a bipartite phenomenon in the continental Africa. It is a "vice" that acts as a stabilizing agent and a crime reduction mechanism in different African communities. It has been and can be used "for personal improvements, social advancement, gaining of wealth, protection from sickness and danger, and giving people the ability to reveal secrets and see into the future".³³ On the other hand, it has marred many destinies, plunged many into chronic ailments, caused early deaths and entombments of many, put many families into perpetual weeping, agony, heartbreak and dilemma, stripped many parents of their children and many children of their parents, and instigated fear, distrust, and hatred between and among people that ought to be one. Above all, witchcraft has erected a great wall of dichotomy between many, if not all, witches and God, because of their nefarious acts.

ATTENTION

The writer is a devoted Christian and thus does not preach nor advocate witchcraft. He only wrote on the positivity as well as the negativity of witchcraft as a critical analysis would require and as a free thinker would do.

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